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Ronald Steel: Do Democrats Start Wars?

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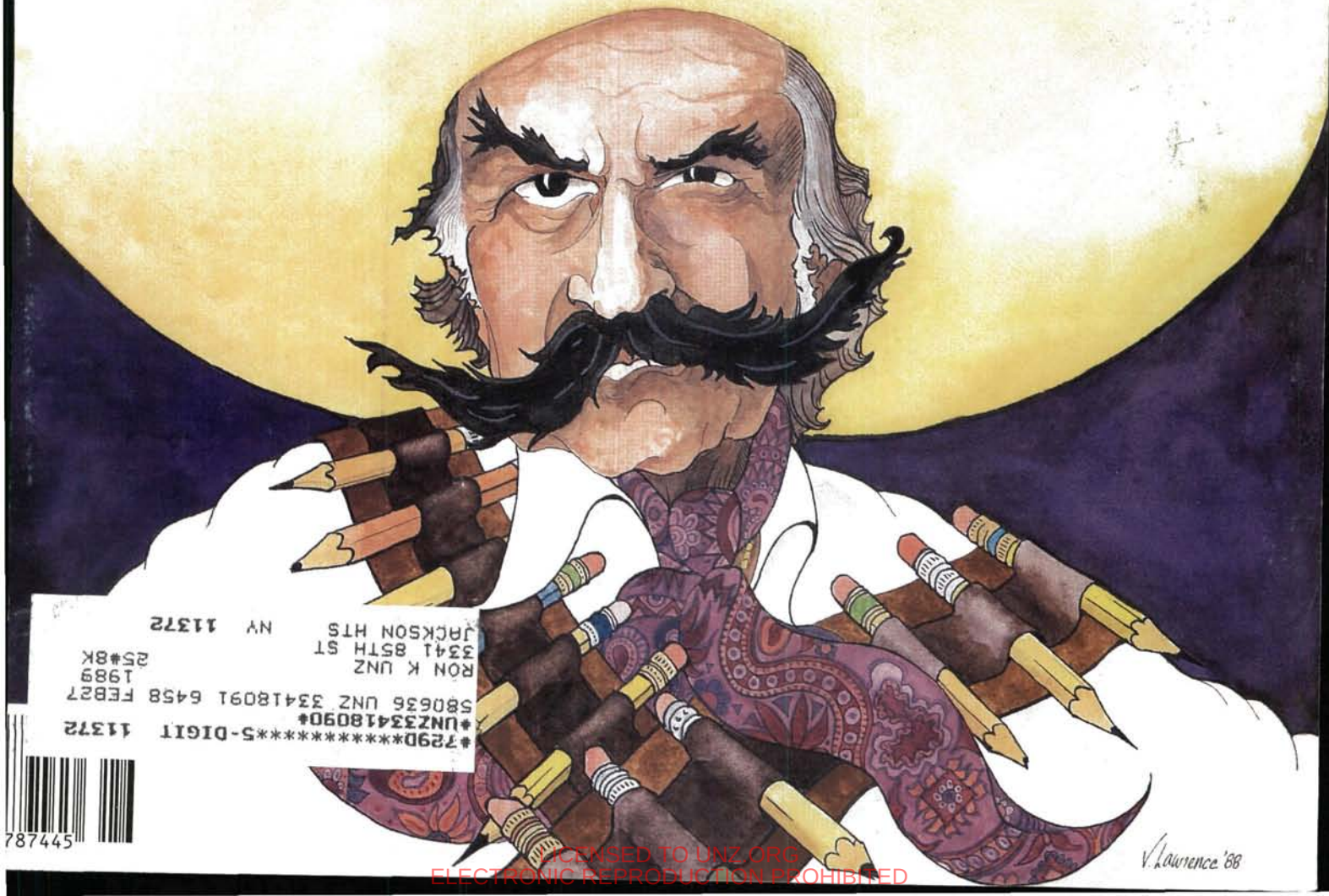
THE NEW REPUBLIC

Guerrilla Dandy

The Life and Easy Times of Carlos Fuentes

by Enrique Krauze



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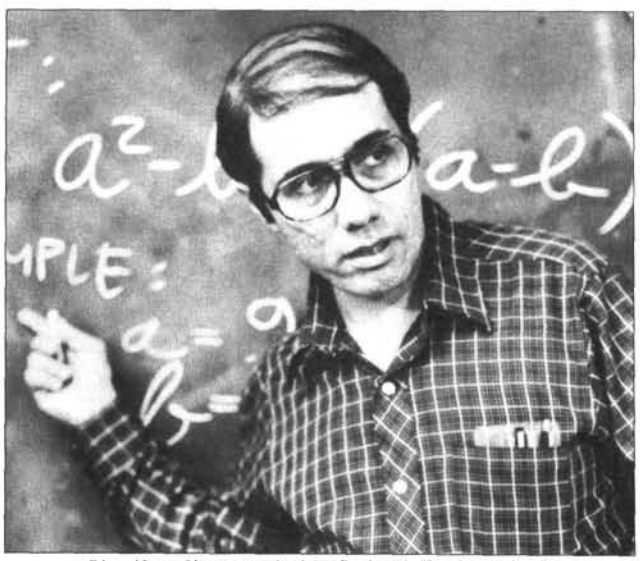

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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4 **TRB FROM WASHINGTON** ..... JAPAN-HANDLING
If Henry Kissinger and Cyrus Vance agree on something, it's probably a bad idea.

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** ..... On stock market valor, the summit, &c.

7 **THE EDITORS** ..... THE CASE FOR SPACE
There's a lot for America to do in space besides trying to shoot down Russian missiles.
AMBUSH AT AMHERST
The censoring of Julius Lester.
NOTEBOOK

8 **CHARLES PAUL FREUND** ..... THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST
From California to boomer babies.

11 **FRED BARNES** ..... WHITE HOUSE WATCH: FRIENDLY GAMBITS
What Gorbachev nearly got away with.

12 **CAMPBELL FERGUSON** ..... POSTCARD GLASGOW: SCOTCHED
The fate of Margaret Thatcher among her northern compatriots.

14 **ROBERT D. KAPLAN** ..... THE PRESS: FROM AFAR
If Afghanistan war reporters spent more time in Afghanistan, they'd get the story right.

16 **MORTON M. KONDRACKE** ..... DON'T LEGALIZE DRUGS
The costs of a new consensus.

19 **DANIEL A. FARBER** ..... 'TAKING' LIBERTIES
The Fifth Amendment may be the next victim of conservative judicial activism.

22 **RONALD STEEL** ..... DO DEMOCRATS START WARS?
History holds a bizarre lesson for pacifists: vote Republican.

24 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ..... ON FILMS: DANSE MACABRE
Evelyn Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* is a great success on screen.

26 **ROBERT BRUSTEIN** ..... ON THEATER: THE LIMITS OF THE AUTEUR
Great sets, abysmal acting in Lucian Pintilie's production of *The Cherry Orchard*.

28 **ENRIQUE KRAUZE** ..... THE GUERRILLA DANDY
The curious career of Carlos Fuentes, everybody's favorite Mexican: where his literary and political illusions were born and where they've led him.

32 **DAVID LEHMAN** ..... POEM *Rejection Slip*

38 **JUDITH N. SHKLAR** ..... THE PARANOID'S PARADISE
Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction by Jean Starobinski

41 **SVEN BIRKERTS** ..... O ALBANY
Quinn's Book by William Kennedy

42 **MOSCOW DIARIST** ..... BIG DEAL

COVER by Vint Lawrence for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 28.

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FROM WASHINGTON

JAPAN-HANDLING

In Hollywood, you know an actress has arrived when she's seen on the arm of a big-shot producer at a trendy restaurant. In Washington, you know a policy idea has arrived when it's endorsed by Henry Kissinger in *Foreign Affairs*. In the current issue, Kissinger and Cyrus Vance offer "Bipartisan Objectives for American Foreign Policy," in which they resolve all outstanding foreign policy problems in a miraculous 23 pages—must reading for anyone who would like an excuse not to read *Foreign Affairs* anymore.

On the subject of trade with Japan, Kissinger and Vance write: "The American-Japanese dialogue must not be confined to mutual harassment and recrimination on an industry-by-industry basis. . . . The two countries should . . . establish an overall trade balance the United States would find tolerable; within that balance, Japan would have the choice of either reducing its exports or increasing its imports. . . ."

Advocates of this arrangement call it "managed trade." The idea is that instead of endless, wearisome attempts to open up Japanese markets to this product or that one, and rather than throwing up protectionist trade barriers of our own, let's just cajole or coerce the Japanese into agreeing to reduce their trade surplus (still running at about $60 billion a year with the United States) and let them worry about how to go about it.

This approach to the trade deficit has been building steam for a while. Liberal economist Lester Thurow endorsed it years ago. (So did TNR's economics correspondent, Robert Kuttner.) Last winter it was advocated in a widely discussed article in the *Harvard Business Review*. It is promoted in an influential book published this spring, called *Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead* (Basic Books). Lee Iacocca casually urges it in his own new book, *Talking Straight* (Bantam). And now . . . Kissinger and stardom.

The theory behind the idea of managed trade is that the Japanese mentality dooms traditional free-trade thinking to failure. As Clyde Prestowitz, the former Reagan administration trade official who wrote *Trading Places*, puts it: "The United States and Japan have fundamentally different understandings of the purposes and workings of a national economy." The Japanese concentrate on production, not consumption. They're far less obsessed with increasing their standard of living. They treasure traditional business relationships, even at the cost of missing bargains, which makes their home market hard for foreigners to crack. Meanwhile, they are ruthlessly organized to capture foreign markets, irrespective of short-term profits.

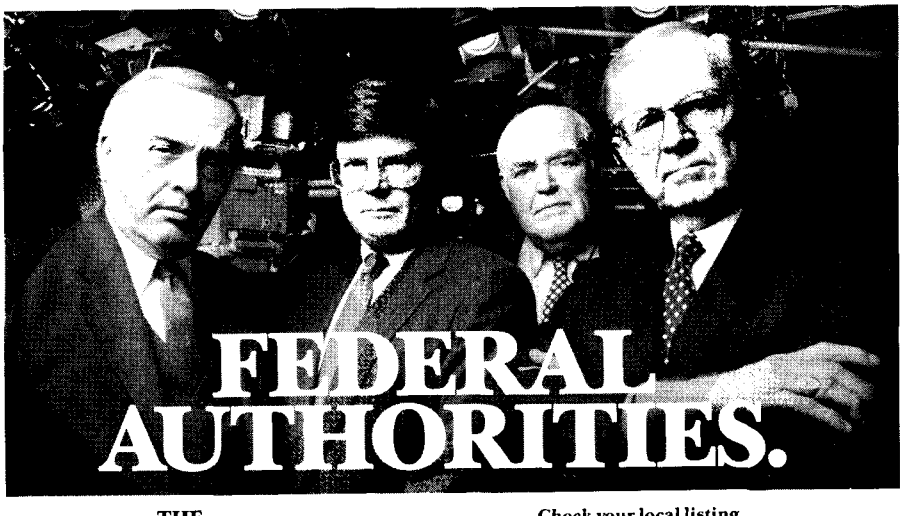
All of this means that traditional solutions to the trade deficit are futile. The Japanese will always sell us more than they buy from us no matter how good or cheap our products, no matter how skilled our managers, no matter how many formal trade barriers we knock down. Far better than babbling about open markets and level playing fields, let's talk to them in terms of national economic destiny—a language they understand.

Prestowitz and the others tend to be ambiguous about whether they think we ought to envy the Japanese their alleged economic mentality. Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was a specific and rather persuasive rebuttal to the idea that a nation prospers by running a huge trade surplus, a philosophy that used to go by the name of mercantilism. If the Japanese actually are genetically programmed to hand over $60 billion dollars of real stuff every year, indefinitely, in exchange for nothing but little bits of paper and electronic blips, it's tempting to say, "Go ahead. Make my day."

Even if they use their blips to buy up American companies and real estate, what does that get them? Until they decide to spend the profits (that is, run a trade deficit instead of a trade surplus), it just gets them more blips.

If we ordered the Japanese to choose between increasing their imports and cutting their exports, there's not much doubt which they'd pick. As Prestowitz and the others describe Japan's economy, the forces that discourage imports are

continued on page 42



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CORRESPONDENCE

THE START OPTION

To the editors:
Primers such as TNR's "Summit Primer" (May 30) are useful ways of keeping in mind key points on important subjects. We can agree that "less isn't necessarily better," "that START won't necessarily make things worse," and that "things can get better under START." The last point, now that the INF treaty has been ratified, is crucial. The question we should all be asking ourselves is whether we are better or worse off with or without the START agreement we are negotiating. I submit we are better off with a START agreement that makes deep cuts in the most destabilizing Soviet forces and leaves us able to maintain a survivable retaliatory force at lower levels than where we would be under a no-START condition where both sides are free to deploy whatever they wish. In today's budgetary and political climate, it is unrealistic to assume we can outspend the Soviets in the numbers and types of nuclear weapons we can deploy. Even with a START agreement we would need to assess carefully which permitted strategic force modernization options were most cost-effective for us. But certainly the task of finding such options would be much easier under an acceptable START agreement than doing so facing an unlimited Soviet offensive threat.

I also fully agree that we don't desperately need a START agreement. I believe it is in our national interest to conclude a treaty along the lines we have been negotiating, providing we can reach a satisfactory resolution with the Soviets on the issues that still divide us. But we are not desperate for an agreement, nor will we compromise U.S. national security to achieve one. As the president has repeatedly said, we want a good agreement, not a quick one.

MAX M. KAMPELMAN
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C.

NUNN'S PLACE

To the editors:
Hendrik Hertzberg has it all wrong ("Bar Nunn," May 23). Making Sam Nunn vice president would accomplish two utterly salutary things: get him out of the Senate, where he does nothing but damage; and place him in the one job in which his dullness, his predictability, and his inflated reputation would outshine even his predecessor's accomplishments in these crucial areas.

DANIEL OKRENT
Worthington, Massachusetts

CRASH LANDING

To the editors:
It is ironic that the New York Stock Exchange specialist system, which did the most to stabilize a perilous situation on October 19, should now come under severe attack ("Crash Victors" by James J. Cramer, May 9). On that turbulent day the NYSE specialist stood alone to maintain an orderly and liquid market. In most cases there was simply no one else out there—no middleman, no institutional traders. As a result, some specialists' inventories grew to many times the norm. More than a few lost an entire year's profits in a single day. Aggregate losses amounted to over $2 billion. Yet, because of the specialists' willingness and ability to assume risk, over 95 percent of all stocks listed on the NYSE were continuously traded.

Detractors claim the specialist system is monopolistic. In reality, NYSE specialists compete every day with six regional exchanges and the over-the-counter market and must yield to clients. And in the crunch on October 19, 1987, the percentage of NYSE market share actually increased while orders on the regional exchanges and the OTC declined.

Did some of us make misjudgments as the market began to tumble? Perhaps. Were there glitches in the system? Yes, but they were not insurmountable. As a NYSE specialist myself, I'm proud to have been part of the finest marketplace in the world in its finest hour.

JOSEPH J. CORSO
New York, New York

RIO POWER

To the editors:
In addition to his arguments in defense of the multilateralism of Michael Dukakis ("The Road to Rio," May 30), TRB might have noted that Dukakis was technically correct when he said that the Rio Treaty "superseded" the Monroe Doctrine. According to Article VI, Section 2 of the Constitution, treaties are the "supreme law of the land." By comparison, the Monroe Doctrine is a 165-year-old, non-binding policy statement that has no more relevance to the modern world than Washington's warning against "entangling alliances" (the North Atlantic Treaty superseded that).

MARK S. BYRNES
Austin, Texas

MCLAGLEN GROUPIE

To the editors:
When your researcher can't tell Thomas Jefferson from Alexander Hamilton ("The Culture of Plagiarism," April 18), well, you know what history is nowadays. But when your reviewer, One of the Great Minds of Our Time, Garry Wills ("Standing Pat," May 2), cannot distinguish between John McLaughlin and Victor McLaglen, I say it is serious.

JOHN M. EKEBERG
Santa Rosa, California

HAMMER ALL DAY

To the editors:
Kudos to "misanthrope" Joe Queenan's "If *I* Had A Hammer" (May 16) on folk music and folksingers. Allow me to increase the vitriol level with a few more reasons for hating folksingers (and folk music):

Every one of them sings "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" and/or "This Land is Your Land," and inevitably makes you sing along.

Pete Seeger refuses to die.

They talk slow and deliberate, as if to signify some inner wisdom so righteous and weighty that it takes eons to spit it all out (but precious few seconds for listeners to digest it).

They spawned the "Prairie Home Companion" show.

And the No. 1 reason for hating folksingers and folk music: they question the principle of papal infallibility.

DAVID P. HONAN
Austin, Texas

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JUNE 27, 1988

THE CASE FOR SPACE

Reminiscing about the days of Tang commercials and moon shots must be a common pastime at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration these days. Life there isn't as fun as it was in the 1960s, when the space program had a well-defined, widely endorsed mission, and NASA officials didn't have to grovel for money. Lately they've been sheepishly asking Congress for a substantial funding hike, and so far the response isn't encouraging. In fact, the omens on Capitol Hill are bad enough that there's talk of sacrificing the centerpiece of NASA's program for the 1990s, a permanently manned space station. Worse still, a recent Congressional Budget Office report suggests that one way to keep NASA's budget in line is to de-emphasize manned missions generally. As the NASA budget is combed in the weeks ahead, there emerges the alarming possibility that Congress will casually jettison a long-standing American goal: the *human* exploration of space.

What NASA needs is an administration that can frame an ambitious, coherent space policy and sell it to the American people. Unfortunately, it isn't going to have one before January. And it may not have one even then. The question of how outer space will be used in the next century is a potentially rich source of rhetoric for the presidential campaign, but it remains largely untapped. This is bad news not just for TV news producers, but for the human race. Everyone's fixated on the minutiae of nuclear arms talks, but it may be space-policy decisions made in Washington and Moscow over the next few years that end up determining whether we blow up the world.

NASA deserves some of the blame for its predicament. It should never have let itself slip into a technocratic mode, trying to justify every action with cost-benefit analysis. Back in the golden years there was none of this green-eyeshade stuff. President Kennedy deemed the Apollo project to have self-evident merit, and few disagreed. There weren't many Americans, on that day in 1969 when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, who wondered whether the effort had been worthwhile. But when Apollo ended and NASA was left with less sexy projects to push, it started talking nickels and dimes. The space shuttle, we were told, would partly pay for itself by ferrying commercial satellites. As this claim proved exaggerated, and the federal budget deficit widened, NASA fell under closer scrutiny.

Hence the mundane terms of the present space station debate. The station's supporters have been touting its short-term payoffs, especially in materials science—purer alloys, cheaper drugs, etc. In addition, they note, it will be a repair shop for the expanding array of high-tech gadgets in orbit: observatories that will illuminate Earth's ecology and revolutionary telescopes. The trouble with stressing these concrete uses is that they don't really call for a space station. Relatively cheap unmanned platforms, periodically visited by astronauts, could handle the materials-science research, and the space shuttle could handle low-orbit, high-tech repairs. This is the point made in the CBO report: by relying on automation we could hold the NASA budget to its current $9 billion (much less, in real terms, than the Apollo-era budget at its zenith), whereas if the space station and other core NASA projects proceed apace, the budget will grow to $14 billion (in 1988 dollars) by 1993 and $16 billion by the century's end.

What NASA's champions should be emphasizing is that the short-term payoffs of a manned space station, though nice, are incidental. The real purpose of the station is deeper and simpler: first, to put people in space, and keep them there; second, to form a base for sending people farther into space. Without a space station, a manned mission to Mars and a manned scientific outpost on the

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moon will be tricky projects, at best.

Of course, there remains the larger question: Why send humans to Mars, or anywhere else in space, instead of using machines, which can gather roughly the same information more cheaply? First there's the stirring, manifest-destiny line of argument. This rationale has been tainted by association with "Star Trek" fans and third-rate poets, but you don't have to wax rhapsodic to consider an extra-terrestrial human presence a natural extension of the trajectory of history. It's human to invent. It's human to explore. It's human to ride the latest technology to uncharted territory and then stand around marveling at it. Besides, a human presence in space is uniquely conducive to some of NASA's less quantifiable goals, such as national prestige and international cooperation. (The space station is to be built with the help of Canada, Western Europe, and Japan, and even U.S.-Soviet collaborations are being pondered.) Nothing would get the world's attention like someone saying, "Hi, Mom" from Mars, live via satellite.

Finally, there's the pragmatic rationale: if we're going to ask Americans to support a space program, we can at least let them read about it in *People* magazine. Human beings naturally thrill at the thought of a countryman performing revolutionary feats, and if they feel this thrill justifies the taxes that pay for it, that's a justification of sorts for the whole program. It means the people consider the intangible rewards of a manned space program—spiritual rewards, recreational rewards, whatever you want to call them—worthwhile.

It's not surprising that so many politicians are reluctant to buy these kinds of arguments. Fiscal times are hard, after all, and tax hikes are unpopular. But there's a place in the budget where money for an ambitious space program can be found. Just look in the "space weapons" section.

The superpowers are on the verge of carrying the weapons race into space. President Reagan is proceeding, though not as briskly as he'd like, with the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). And, if he had his way, he would

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	NOT WITH A BANG	—	1
2.	THE BIG SLEEP	*	30
3.	HARM'S WAYS	—	1
4.	FEDERAL EXPRESSION	—	1
5.	SMOKE ON THE WATER	*	2
6.	SEOUL SEARCHERS	*	2
7.	BRAKING STORIES	1	3
8.	TO THE MANNERS BORN	—	1
9.	REASONABLE FACSIMILES	—	1
10.	LITTLE RASCALS	—	1

1. NOT WITH A BANG

California. How did the story on California's June primary become California's role in the November election? California is arguably the most important state, but primary theatrics died a while back. There is the breathtaking stupidity of the presidential selection process, but that angle played out in Iowa. You won't hear of it again for a long time.

2. THE BIG SLEEP

AIDS. A gush of AIDS-related items is unaccompanied by much mainstream concern. The current high-intensity angle is that we're dozing through a vital period, and will awaken to Malthusian numbers of infected, with public health bills we can't pay. We've been here before, but the AIDS story is curiously cyclical.

3. HARM'S WAYS

Mirecki. What stands out in the coverage of the Navy man who drowned in a swimming pool during training is the anti-military flavor: military culture is tough, macho, sometimes brutal. No kidding. Subcultures form for reasons: selection and survival. Imposing (feminized) mainstream values on them is futile. The culture's confused again about what it wants from its military.

4. FEDERAL EXPRESSION

Savings & Loans. The collapse of a pair of Orange County S&Ls points again to the matter of relaxed, if any, regulation. The changed federal role in communications, travel, and financial affairs has had consequences. Do we like them? This might be a useful election year debate, if anyone wanted one.

5. SMOKE ON THE WATER

Environment '88. George Bush's flip-flop on offshore oil drilling may signal, at last, a political breakthrough for environmental issues. Between ozone, acid rain, water shortages, spoiled beaches, etc., on the domestic front, and global angles involving massive filth and despoliation, this is an issue that could move above the fold. It's up to Dukakis.

6. SEOUL SEARCHERS

Asian backlash. Anti-American sentiment is rising in Asia, even among the middle classes. Though fueled by trade concerns and Western Yellow Perilism, it is itself an ethnocentric phenomenon. This is more than demonstrations: Japan's anti-Semitic murmurings, the bizarre historical revisionism, the racist statements, even Taiwan's recent Miss Universe pageant are expressing it.

7. BRAKING STORIES

Post-summit. It may have been a holiday weekend, but the story of the summit is the elasticity of the news environment. All other news was displaced from the electronic environment for the sake of a pseudo-event. This naturally raises the question: What merit did the temporarily buried stories have, anyway?

8. TO THE MANNERS BORN

Heredity. The nature-nurture paradigm is shifting in favor of nature again. Research—especially twin research—indicates our characters may be inherited after all. The social implications of this, especially as fodder for reactionary racial and sexual thought, are profound. In fact, social thought is headed left, and this seems less likely to be shaping than polarizing.

9. REASONABLE FACSIMILES

Fax machines. Inexorably, faxes are becoming as common as photocopiers. Once exotic, they can now be rented by the call and are even turning up at home. Instantaneity—once thought the realm of pc's and home earth stations—now looks reassuringly low-tech. Tomorrow usually looks surprisingly like today.

10. LITTLE RASCALS

Babies. The rush to beat the biological clock has resulted in a lot of boomer babies. How many, and into what social class they are being born, is apparent from a series of surprising baby-related skirmishes. People want no-baby sections in airplanes and upscale restaurants, to name a couple of fronts; more are probably coming.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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build an arsenal of anti-satellite weapons (ASATs)—missiles, fired from F-15 fighter planes, that can smash Soviet satellites. (Congress has imposed a moratorium on ASAT testing, but ultimately that won't matter, because SDI amounts to an anti-satellite weapons program anyway; anything that can shoot down missiles in space—SDI's reason for being—can easily destroy a floating satellite.) Assuming the nation follows the route Reagan's charted, there's already an invisible line item for space weapons built into future budgets. The number will range anywhere from a few billion dollars a year upward, and probably well upward, once we fall into the infinite loop of an arms race in space: when the Russians insulate their satellites from attack, we'll have to revise our anti-satellite weaponry—which will only lead to new Soviet satellite defenses, and so on. Meanwhile, because the Soviet Union has an ASAT of its own, we'll be designing expensive satellite defenses that will also have to be endlessly upgraded. A space-weapons treaty that bans anti-satellite weapons development and reduces SDI to a harmless little research program would easily save enough money for the space station, which calls for $2 billion a year in the near future.

It's worth noting that, even aside from the expense, militarizing space is a clearly bad thing. The reason is that satellites are good things. They help verify arms accords. They alert the superpowers to impending attack, whether conventional or nuclear, and thus discourage aggression and keep retaliatory trigger fingers relaxed. The world is a better place because of satellites, and therefore is a worse place when people can shoot them down. Anti-satellite weapons, by promising to blind the enemy, only heighten the temptation to launch a nuclear strike.

It's probably too late to rid the world of anti-satellite weapons. The Russians long ago began testing their version of ASAT—a satellite that sidles up to an enemy satellite and then explodes. Then, once we started working on our own ASAT weapon, they cannily announced a unilateral moratorium on ASAT tests, hoping to stop our progress and maintain their monopoly. Congress, angered by the administration's numbness to the space-weapons issue, took the bait, imposing a moratorium after preliminary (and successful) testing of the American ASAT. The upshot is that, while the Russians have some stockpiled ASATs (albeit slow, aging, unreliable ones), we have none (although the one we've tested is much swifter).

The best hope now is for the United States to get exactly the kind of minimal ASAT capability the Russians have—by, say, building a few of the missiles we've already tested—while negotiating a ban on further testing. This would leave neither side with the kind of clear-cut ASAT superiority that might encourage a first nuclear strike. (As a bonus, any ASAT treaty worth its salt would deal the long-awaited death blow to Star Wars, given SDI's inherent anti-satellite capability.)

What all this adds up to is a simple, two-faceted vision of our mission in space that is as unassailable as apple pie. First, protect the benign force of constant satellite surveillance, and thus appreciably increase the chances of civilization's survival, by halting the development of satellite killers. Second, having secured the safety of the Earth's envelope, use it as the base from which to head out into the great beyond. It's a speechwriter's dream: world peace, international cooperation, bold conquest, deepest yearnings of the human spirit, etc., etc. It has at least as much rhetorical power as Star Wars, without the disadvantage of being a stupid idea.

So why haven't any speechwriters seized it? Bush's can't. He's following the administration's lead on Star Wars with the blind fidelity for which he's noted. Dukakis, on the other hand, wants an ASAT treaty and is opposed to Star Wars. Further, he vaguely supports a space station, although he instinctively hedges, wondering whether an unmanned platform wouldn't be cheaper. That's stereotypical Dukakis: cool, technocratic, uninspiring. Here's a prime opportunity to inject some life into his image: come out passionately for a rejuvenated NASA and promise to pay for it by derailing the Republican plan to militarize space. Then break out the Tang.

AMBUSH AT AMHERST

Renewed racism on the American university campus has been a major media theme of the past academic year. Black students, it's said, have been experiencing more racial hostility than they have for a decade. We don't believe it. Yes, there have been one or two spectacularly ugly incidents. But the larger truth is that every respectable college and university in the country is eager to welcome black and other minority students and teachers—and, in fact, goes far out of its way to recruit them. This is particularly true in the most prestigious institutions, where young people of color now routinely constitute upward of ten percent—in many elite places, upward of 20 percent—of the undergraduate cohort.

Among minority students there are still widespread subjective feelings of being patronized or worse. To be sure, some of the subjective feelings are responses to objective slights. To some extent, also, the feeling of being patronized is a necessary byproduct of affirmative action favoritism that blacks themselves have insisted on. And, of course, resentments and insecurities and hostilities on both sides of the color divide continue to feed off one another.

Nevertheless, there has not been a single episode in which any large number of white students has given in to the kind of race hatred that many black students indulged by joining in a chorus of approval at recent appearances on campus by the racist demagogue Louis Farrakhan (see "Hate Story" by David Kurapka, TNR, May 30). In fact, most whites—especially college-aged whites, born after the Civil Rights Act, accept as second nature the Constitution's super-ego injunction to racial tolerance. They even generally accept affirmative action measures that put them at a disadvantage to blacks in the closed economies of university admissions and hiring.

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It is not even unusual for white university administrators actually to thank black student protesters for engaging in illegal acts to secure unattainable or unreasonable ends. This sort of truly patronizing behavior has been elevated to a high art at the University of Massachusetts—Amherst. But finally, there has been a blow at the norms of academic freedom so devastating that even UMass Amherst's usually quite craven chancellor, Joseph Duffey, felt obliged to criticize the new on-campus McCarthyites.

In March the entire faculty of the university's Afro-American Studies department voted to expel the department's most accomplished member, the distinguished black man of letters Julius Lester. Lester is a fiercely independent person, but hardly the only such person in academia. He has published extensively and is an immensely compelling teacher as well, the winner of many teaching prizes. His crimes would seem such only to those with no understanding of academic freedom, who insist that their colleagues march in ideological lockstep. To such people, Lester's offenses were many. He does not believe that the very existence of black studies as an academic field requires a monolithic politics. He has converted to Judaism and become (oh, horrors!) a Zionist. He does not support Jesse Jackson for president, and didn't last time either.

The official reason given for Lester's expulsion from the department—the *official* reason—was that Lester, in his most recent book, *Lovesong*, dared to make some critical remarks about James Baldwin. Besides expelling Lester for this heresy, the department produced a 40-page corporate defense of Baldwin, designed, said the department's nonentity chairman, Chester Davis, to "set the record straight."

In a bizarre arrangement that almost parodies the collapse of scholarship into an academic spoils system, Lester has been moved to the Judaic Studies department. In the fall he will teach one course on a comparison of Jewish and black oppression and another on ancient biblical interpretation.

Although Lester is black, his ouster for a refusal to conform to approved racial views is both racist and censorious. For some years now there has been a shadow on the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech in America's universities on questions touched by race. Historians are accused of somehow justifying slavery if even their most scrupulous scholarship somehow finds it, on one or another score, somewhat less brutal than traditional accounts of the "peculiar institution"; sociologists are wary of frank discussions of the black family; psychologists shy away from discussions about differentials in achievement between black women and black men. There are many other issues over which there are inhibitions, if not actual taboos. People are not merely inhibited, as they should be, from saying things that are racist; they are inhibited from touching on vast areas that are considered racially sensitive. The fact that criticism of a prominent black literary figure is now apparently verboten shows how far the blanket of silence has now spread.

Julius Lester, of course, won't be silenced. But his is a terrible lesson about the costs of true freedom of thought for black students and black intellectuals. It's not good for America, and—like many other such vindictive little triumphs—it will turn out to be especially tragic for American blacks.

NOTEBOOK

□ OPERATION PUSH:

Time isn't right for hard push for Glenn, Ohio Democrats say

—*Akron Beacon Journal*, May 12

Ohio Dems plan push for Glenn

—*Dayton Daily News*, May 12

(thanks to Andrew Taylor, Arlington, Virginia)

□ HEADS I LOSE, TAILS YOU LOSE:

A Lead in Polls Could Be a Trap for Dukakis

—*L.A. Times*, May 22

Between the Lines, Latest Polls Warn of Disaster for Bush

—same paper, same day

(thanks to Peter McCarty, Los Angeles, California)

□ EARLY RETIREMENT:

Once Reagan Goes, the Party May Be Over For the GOP

—*Washington Post*, July 6, 1986

Reagan's Decline Is Good News For the GOP

—same paper, August 2, 1987

(thanks to Alexander Wohl, Washington, D.C.)

□ WEALTH INSURANCE:

Cost of AIDS Treatment Could Double in 2 Years

—*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 26

New Study Sees Lower Costs for AIDS Care

—*New York Times*, same day

(thanks to Nina Shoehalter, Berkeley, California)

□ COMMERCIAL BRIBERY UPDATE: Continental Airlines is advertising a choice of fares between New York and Chicago. Either you can pay $119 peak ($99 off-peak) for any seat on any flight, no restrictions, or you can pay $375 each way on a round trip (the standard full fare) and get a free round-trip coach seat to London or Paris next winter. We suppose there are people in the market for both a trip to Chicago

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now and a trip to Europe months from now, just as there are people who could use a package deal on a bar of soap and a Chevy station wagon. But of course the real reason for the package deal is that the trip to Europe will be taken by someone other than the person (or, most likely, the company) paying for the trip to Chicago. This is the reductio ad absurdum of frequent flier programs—the clearest illustration yet that a large chunk of the cost of a full-fare air ticket is simply a bribe to corporate employees. Maybe that's exactly the point Continental is trying to make.

□ CREDIT WHERE DUE: "Junk-Mail Politics," an article by Gregg Easterbrook about political fund-raising that was our cover story April 25, should have acknowledged the generous help of Denison Hatch, editor and publisher of *Who's Mailing What*, a newsletter covering the direct mail industry. Based on Mr. Hatch's usual consulting fee of $200 an hour, our article reflected about $600 of Mr. Hatch's wisdom.

□ TALES OF TWO CITIES: We are pleased to announce the publication of books by two of our frequent contributors: *Beirut: The Fragmented City* (Norton) by Fouad Ajami, and *Hardball: How Politics Is Played—Told by One Who Knows the Game* (Summit) by Christopher Matthews.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

FRIENDLY GAMBITS

PRESIDENT REAGAN and his aides could only guess why the Soviets were so eager for him to stay in the Kremlin during the Moscow summit. The Soviets never offered a credible reason. One Soviet official explained that the president's convenience was his only concern. It would be much easier for Reagan, 77, to get to signing ceremonies and meetings if he stayed nearby in the Kremlin. Nobody from the administration believed this. The Soviets must be up to something, aides figured. They said Reagan would stay in Spaso House, the American ambassador's residence. They said this a half-dozen times, since the Soviets kept coming back with the proposal that Reagan spend his Moscow nights in the Kremlin.

With the Soviets, says Secretary of State George Shultz, you just have to keep saying no. Throughout the Moscow summit, the Soviets probed for small advantages. Mikhail Gorbachev did it so often and so cynically that the president's aides grew angry. At times Reagan was the only American who seemed unaware of what Gorbachev was doing. One aide called Gorbachev "a manipulative s.o.b.," but not to his face and not in Reagan's earshot either. In the end, the American tack was simply to say no, repeatedly. No to staying in the Kremlin, no to a Soviet-American "seminar" on human rights, no to a statement endorsing "peaceful coexistence," no to a deceptive proposal, made by Gorbachev, to withdraw troops from Central Europe.

The Kremlin gambit began months before the summit. In February newspaper stories from Moscow quoted an unnamed Soviet official as saying Reagan might tour the country and stay in the Kremlin when he came to the summit in late May. (Administration officials determined later that the official was Anatoly Dobrynin, the former Soviet ambassador to the United States.) Then a KGB official raised the idea with Tom Griscom, the White House communications director, when he went to Moscow in March to make arrangements for the summit. And when Griscom returned to Moscow a few weeks later, the official brought it up again. In April the White House advance team arrived in Moscow, and it was shown the guest quarters at the Kremlin. Finally, after the state dinner on May 30, the second night of the summit, Gorbachev took the president and Nancy Reagan for a look. The Reagans weren't tempted.

THERE WAS PRECEDENT, of course, for staying in the Kremlin. That's what Richard Nixon did when he went to a Moscow summit in 1972. But Griscom knew what security problems this had caused. Since there was no secure area in the Kremlin (for Americans, anyway), Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had to sit in the presidential limousine with the motor running for private conversations. Reagan aides did not want to have to do that again. They erected a special six-by-eight-foot security box at Spaso House for private meetings. "It was cozy," an official said. A machine made noise outside so voice vibrations couldn't be intercepted. "It made you feel like you were going into a wind tunnel," the official said.

Nor did Reagan aides want to give the Soviets a symbolic triumph, and housing an anti-Communist president at the epicenter of the Communist world might be a small one. "Staying in the Kremlin would be too much for this president," said a senior White House official. "It wouldn't fit Reagan." By the same token, the White House turned down proposals for Reagan to lay a wreath at Lenin's mausoleum in Red Square and at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow. "This is not the president to do those things," the official said. As early as last December, just after the Washington summit, White House officials had ruled out wreath-layings. After all, Gorbachev hadn't done any in Washington. On the Kremlin, what cinched it was Nancy Reagan. She was against spending the night there.

Gorbachev trotted out two clever proposals at his first session with Reagan on May 29. That was the meeting devoted to human rights. He suggested a seminar at which American and Soviet leaders would discuss this issue. He said members of Congress, senators, academics, and corporate leaders could come, but he seemed most interested in getting members of Congress there. Administration officials suspected Gorbachev of having an ulterior motive. They concluded that rather than talking about human rights, he wants to press members of Congress to cut military spending. (Gorbachev kept making favorable refer-

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ences to the role of Congress in impeding the war efforts of presidents.) In any case, the Reagan team saw the seminar as a dodge, a way for the Soviets to avoid making real human rights concessions required by the Helsinki accord. They said they'd study his proposal, which means they'll bury it.

At the initial meeting, Gorbachev also touched off what has become the best-known confrontation at the summit. He passed Reagan a piece of paper with proposed language for the final communiqué. It called for "peaceful coexistence," rejection of "military means" of solving disputes, "non-interference in internal affairs," and acceptance of each country's brand of government. Reagan glanced at it, and said something to the effect that the language seemed OK, but he'd have to show it to his aides. They were horrified. The language, while vague, could be construed as barring the United States from sending aid to Afghan rebels and from criticizing human rights abuses in the Soviet Union, and as accepting communism as the moral equivalent of democracy.

The Soviets lobbied hard for the language. And at the last working session on June 1, Gorbachev got emotional on the subject. He sat on the edge of his chair. His eyes, according to a Reagan aide, "flashed." He waved his fist and made slashing gestures. He urged Reagan to go along, and he also sought Shultz's and Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci's endorsement. Reagan found the phrase "peaceful coexistence" offensive. He said that shortly after the Nixon administration agreed to that kind of relationship, the Soviets were moving to make Angola a satellite. Gorbachev said the two delegations should separate and talk over the matter in private. They did, but nothing changed. Reagan, an aide said, "just kept saying no." Gorbachev gave up.

GORBACHEV'S trickiest ploy was a tour of Red Square. Actually, it was Reagan's idea. As he and Gorbachev walked into their first meeting, Reagan said Shultz had told him he ought to see Red Square. The next day Griscom asked if a decision on visiting Red Square had been reached. A KGB official said, "I think it will be all right." Griscom was wary, but Reagan was eager for sightseeing. After their one-on-one meeting on May 31, Gorbachev and Reagan walked out of the Kremlin and were driven next door to Red Square. The scene there was a setup. Five clusters of citizens were arranged in the square, and each brought up a different point with Reagan. The points, it turned out, were the same ones Gorbachev had been making in the private meetings.

At the first group, Reagan was asked if he expected another arms control agreement. "We're working on it," he said. Gorbachev then launched into his arms control spiel. At another group Reagan was asked if he'd approved a joint Mars mission with the Soviet Union. "I have asked our space people to look at it," he said. And so on. In truth, the White House has looked at the Mars proposal and doesn't like it. Gorbachev's real aim, officials figure, is to acquire new technology from the United States that he couldn't get any other way. "We're going to make sure that we don't give away anything more than we want to," a senior Reagan aide insisted. White House officials felt the conversations with the citizens were obviously canned. But they aren't sure Reagan saw the whole thing as choreographed. "He thoroughly enjoyed the chance to see some Soviet citizens," the aide said.

Reagan had his own gambit. He praised Soviet women at every opportunity. Soviet expert Suzanne Massie had persuaded the president that he could win over Soviet women by flattery. All Reagan needed to do was stress their courage and importance. Soviet women would be totally charmed.

He followed this advice shamelessly. In Red Square he told one group, "I have great admiration for the women of Russia. You are so courageous and contribute so much to the whole country." Even before he got to Moscow, he jumped on the bandwagon of Soviet women. In an Oval Office interview with two Soviet TV correspondents, he said Russian women are "a great bulwark of strength and solidity in the maintaining of the home and the things that they stand for—the standing in lines to bring home what is necessary for the family, and all of that."

The pitch on Soviet women got Reagan out of a jam. After his June 1 press conference at Spaso House, he was peppered with questions as he left the podium. "I'm going to do one answer because I've wanted to say this, and I say it anytime I get a chance. I think that one of the most wonderful forces for stability and good that I have seen in the Soviet Union are the Russian women." With that, he smiled and walked away.

FRED BARNES

POSTCARD GLASGOW

SCOTCHED

MARGARET THATCHER is not prime minister of Britain. She is prime minister of England. After nearly a decade of Thatcher rule, Scotland (a deserted back yard compared with the teeming South, but still in the minds of its inhabitants a distinct country) is now more than ever the bastion of opposition to her and to all that she stands for. The Tories' share of the vote in last June's election slumped, leaving them with a rump of ten MPs out of a total of 72, compared with Labour's 50. Under Mrs. Thatcher's rule the Tory vote in Scotland has shown its sharpest drop in 80 years. In last month's local elections the party of government trailed a poor third north of the border, behind Labour and the Scottish Nationalist Party.

Just why the Conservatives are so unpopular in Scotland is the subject of heated debate within the party. At the recent party conference in prim Perth, a phalanx of alarmists declared that only by promising Scotland a measure of

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self-government could the Tories hope to survive. But this is an argument Mrs. Thatcher abhors. The problem, as she sees it, has nothing to do with Scottish resentment of subjugation to Westminster. The Scots reject her government's policies simply because they have drunk far more deeply than the English of the soporific brew of socialism. Socialism has made Scotland what she calls a "dependency culture." The Scots are unregenerate claimants and dwellers in subsidized housing who have yet to see the Thatcherite light. What they need is a jolly good talking to.

That was presumably the idea behind Thatcher's address last May to the Church of Scotland's General Assembly. Like the irresistible force missing the immovable object by several miles, the prime minister brought the Word to Scotland. " 'If a man shall not work, he shall not eat,' wrote St. Paul to the Thessalonians." The text turned up again in St. Margaret's speech to the Caledonians. She went on: "It is not the creation of wealth that is wrong, but the love of money for its own sake." And finally, with the well-to-do elders of the Church of Scotland wondering what on earth they had done to deserve this harangue, she continued: "We simply cannot delegate the exercise of mercy and generosity to others." The English press and their American acolytes loved it. "MAGGIE CLAIMS MORAL HIGH GROUND!" announced the London *Daily Mail*, *Times*, and *Daily Express* in unison. "THATCHER: SOW, AND YE SHALL REAP FOR ALL," cooed the *Wall Street Journal*, which reprinted the sermon in its May 31 issue.

HAIL, QUEEN MARGARET! HERE COMES QUEEN MAG
ALL PRIM + PROPER WITH A PENCHANT TO NAG;
HER HAIR IT IS FIXED, HER EYE HAS A GLEAM,
BUT ENGLAND HAS PROSPERED, SINCE MAGGIE IS QUEEN.
SHE'S VAIN AS A PEACOCK THAT OPENS ITS TAIL,
SHE'S AS NASTY AS THAT EAGLE ON REAGAN'S AIR MAIL
SHE'S CRAFTY AND JEALOUS, SUSPICIOUS AND MEAN,
AND ONLY ENGLAND IS BRITAIN NOW THAT MAGGIE IS QUEEN
(WITH APOLOGIES TO E + H FARJEON, KINGS AND QUEENS)

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But in their enthusiastic endorsement of this little homily, the prime minister's cheerleaders south of the Scottish border and west of the Irish Sea overlooked one critical thing: how lamentably it failed to achieve its original purpose. Designed to rally the wayward Scots to the banner of Thatcherism, it has provoked the opposite reaction. Where her English fans saw oratory, the Scots saw only a schoolmarm administering an insulting rap on the knuckles. A few days afterward, in a development that somehow escaped the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*, the General Assembly of the Kirk voted not to invite her back.

The sermon was only one of a number of stunts staged by Mrs. Thatcher's public relations men in the past few weeks. The week before, she was in Dundee, blaming the unions for the Ford Motor Company's recent decision not to build a new factory there. And then she made her first really dangerous mistake. She attended the Scottish Cup Final, the soccer equivalent of the Super Bowl. The p.r. man in Mrs. Thatcher's Cabinet who cooked this little image-boosting scheme is now no doubt roasting over a slow flame.

What her advisers failed to anticipate was the din that 40,000 men filled with scotch and hatred can make. Somehow they must have imagined that the sight of what her opponents call the Immaculate Misconception—resplendent in one of her favorite electric-blue suits—attending with regal condescension this quaint Pictish rite, would reduce the assembled barbarians to a deferential hush. Instead, she got the heckling of a lifetime.

In fairness, the fans of the Glasgow Celtics would boo almost any English prime minister. The Celtics are, after all, the Catholic team, whose origins lie in the large Irish immigration to industrial Glasgow in the late 19th century. And the loyalties of Glasgow Catholics remain doggedly to the Celtics, the pope, and the Provisional IRA—emphatically not to the Queen's First Minister, loyalty to whom theoretically remains the prerogative of the Celtics' bitter rivals, the Protestant Glasgow Rangers. Who wear blue. And who didn't reach the Cup Final.

It was a memorable scene, redolent with historical irony: the Grantham grocer's daughter, the spiritual leader of a nation of unspiritual shopkeepers, confronting a baying mob of Catholic Glaswegians. But no less ironic than her lecturing Scots Calvinists about the "fundamental right to choose between good and evil" (no predestination in this theology)—and then quoting the Anglican "Masterpiece Theater" hymn, "I vow to thee my country."

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If Mrs. Thatcher had any real understanding of the classical liberalism and Protestant ethic she professes to stand for, she would not have made these gaffes. It is her misfortune, however, to have imbibed her religion from Methodist English schoolteachers and her economics from American bastardizers of Adam Smith (another Scot)—and to know nothing whatever about sectarianism in soccer.

The Scots are not so ignorant of the Bible that they cannot detect iniquity when a government slashes top tax rates with one hand, while cutting welfare payments with the other, as Thatcher did last March. And they find nothing in Scots tradition to justify Mrs. Thatcher's alternative to local property taxation—the medieval and regressive poll tax (a flat rate payment by all adults for local government services). The government's decision to introduce the poll tax in Scotland before England lies at the heart of the conservative collapse here.

So it is hardly surprising that Mrs. Thatcher's northern mission has only fueled Scotland's loathing. Her attempt to convert Scotland to her own distinctively English creed has called to mind the last English ruler to come to grief at the hands of the Scots. It was King Charles I—the king who lost more than his throne to Cromwell in the English Civil War—who last encountered animosity on this scale when visiting Scotland. With his High Anglican Archbishop Laud, he too sought to persuade the Scots of the merits of alien religious and political doctrines. And look what happened to him.

CAMPBELL FERGUSON

Campbell Ferguson is a Scottish writer living in Oxford.

THE PRESS

FROM AFAR

Peshawar, Pakistan

With a few notable exceptions, the media have drawn a sketch of the Afghan *mujahadeen* as a divided, squabbling pack of seven resistance parties, of more or less equal strengths. A few are said to be controlled by Iranian-style fundamentalists no less intolerant than the Communists clinging on to power in Kabul. According to the daily newspapers, the smartest thing for the *mujahadeen* to do now is to set up a capital of their own in a liberated area, so that the United States might recognize them as a legitimate government.

Much of this is nonsense. But it is the story a reporter is likely to get if, rather than venturing inside Afghanistan, he or she spends a limited time in Pakistan interviewing those elements of the resistance who are articulate, happen to speak English, and agree to be seen on short notice. The media covers Third World violence if it is within easy commuting distance of telex and satellite facilities. South Africa, the West Bank, and Lebanon fall into this category. Afghanistan, where a reporter must travel for weeks on foot under rough, dangerous conditions, does not. So the war in Afghanistan has never really been covered; the sideshow in Pakistan has.

In Pakistan a reporter sees seven different *mujahadeen* organizations. Three of these groups are full of educated English-speakers who put much emphasis on public relations and therefore garner a lot of copy. Two of these three, Sibghatullah Mojadidi's Afghan National Liberation Front and Syed Ahmed Gailani's National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, are a Washington analyst's dream. Mojadidi and Gailani are well-groomed, smooth-talking Islamic modernists who are enemies of any kind of coercion, be it Communist or fundamentalist. The third group is Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami (Party of Islam). Hekmatyar is a charismatic, fundamentalist firebrand, as anti-American as he is anti-Soviet.

The media, particularly the *New York Times* early last spring, described the *mujahadeen* as torn between "moderates" like Mojadidi and Gailani and "fundamentalists" like Hekmatyar. A batch of new stories further implied that the selection of Hekmatyar as the "leader" of the seven-party guerrilla alliance in March meant that the fundamentalists were winning in the power struggle. Actually, Hekmatyar was not elected the leader. The alliance had decided upon a system of rotating, 90-day spokesmen, with each party chairman getting a turn based on a predetermined order. Hekmatyar was simply the first to fill a job that had little real power, and he is scheduled to give it up by mid-June.

Hekmatyar, a 38-year-old former engineering student, is every bit as bad as people say he is. Selig Harrison, a specialist at the Carnegie Endowment, postulates that with rabble-rousers like Hekmatyar getting the upper hand and Najibullah's Communist regime stronger than many give it credit for, it would be a mistake for the United States to recognize hastily a *mujahadeen* government. But in fact, Hekmatyar's emerging victory inside the *mujahadeen* alliance is taking place in Pakistan, not in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan none of these three parties has as much military field presence as other groups.

From a military point of view—the only one that counts in an all-out war where neither side has functioning democratic institutions—the Afghan resistance is largely a two-party affair. These two parties, Yunus Khalis's Hizb-i-Islami (not to be confused with Hekmatyar's party of the same name) and Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami (Islamic Society), represent neither the forces of darkness nor the forces of light, but a muddled gray area in between.

Khalis and Rabbani—two Muslim theologians with easygoing personalities—are nominally "fundamentalist," in the sense that they want a society based on Islamic principles. But there is nothing coercive or inevitably anti-Western about their ideology and method of operation. Owing to the democratic nature of Afghan—particularly Pathan—tribal culture, where each man has the right to go

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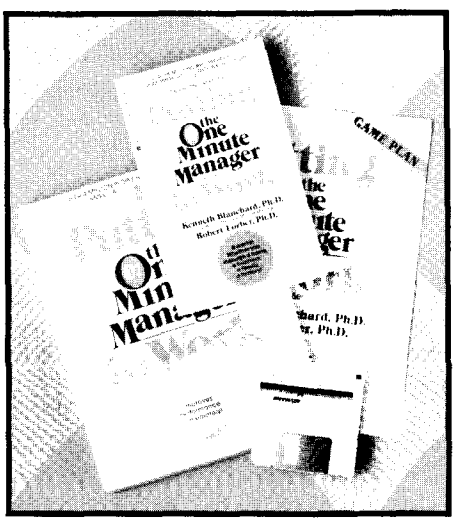

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directly to the leader and complain, dictatorial tendencies are less likely to survive in Sunni Afghanistan than in Shiite Iran.

The British journalist John Fullerton, in an obscure 1983 book about Afghanistan (published by the *Far Eastern Economic Review*), explained why these two parties are strong: "They did not have the Western publicity accorded to the Gailani and Mojadidi families, nor did they have the funds made available by the Gulf to the Islamic revolutionaries. They had little to offer in material terms to the putative membership inside Afghanistan. These two parties had to get things right in terms of organization at the outset. Commanders were chosen with great care. People who showed promise on the battlefield were promoted according to their abilities, not their tribal seniority or their expertise in Koranic recitation. A single overall commander would be appointed to a specific region. . . . He would appoint subordinate commanders and form an embryonic alternative administration in the vacuum left by the departed regime officials." Thus most major resistance commanders in Afghanistan today—Ismael Khan in Herat, Mullah Melang in Kandahar, Jallaluddin Haqqani in Khost, Ahmad Shah Massoud in the Panjshir Valley, "Engineer" Mahmoud in Jalalabad, and Abdul Haq in Kabul—are affiliated with either the Khalis or Rabbani parties. And there appears to be no conflict between them. As a Western diplomat here put it, "Inside Afghanistan, the commanders are working amazingly well together. I've heard only one rumor of conflict and a lot of credible reports of cooperation."

Abdul Haq, the commander for Kabul, is now in Peshawar recovering from a mine injury in a field operation last fall. At 29 he is the senior Khalis party commander. Men twice his age take orders from him, quite a phenomenon in a tradition-bound society. He works 20 hours a day, dispatching hundreds of messages and orders to a large network of subcommanders in the Kabul region. There is always a room full of *mujahadeen*, who have come in from the field, waiting to see him. He has little time for journalists and turns down almost all interview requests. Unlike Hekmatyar and others who have high profiles in Pakistan, Abdul Haq is actually fighting a war.

BETWEEN mid-March and late May, after the start of the Soviet withdrawal, the Afghan Communist regime was forced out of 18 district towns, seven of which were in the heart of the country and yielded massive stores of ammunition for the *mujahadeen*. By the time this article appears, that number will probably have doubled. A Western diplomat here calls it "a string of reverses that is without precedent." As more and more posts fall to the guerrillas, it gets increasingly difficult for the regime to defend major cities and the capital of Kabul.

Abdul Haq believes it would be a mistake for the *mujahadeen* to set up a capital and declare a government until Kabul actually falls. He argues that if the *mujahadeen* have a capital, say, in Jalalabad, and the Communists hold Kabul, foreign powers could try to pressure the two sides into a "compromise." But there will be no deals. Unless the Russians keep 20,000 or so crack troops in the country to hold the capital and perhaps another city, Khalis and Rabbani party commanders—in addition to some others—should in effect be running Afghanistan by sometime in 1989, if not sooner. The *mujahadeen* will not have to march into Kabul or "scale the walls." The major cities will fall from within after weeks or months of guerrilla pressure.

The Khalis party will be more important than the Rabbani party because the Khalis troops are particularly strong in Kabul and its environs. Also, the Khalis party is made up exclusively of Pathans, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, which has always ruled the country; Rabbani's *mujahadeen* are mainly Tajiks and Uzbeks. Like Abdul Haq, most of Khalis's commanders are fiercely religious Muslims who happen to get along fine with foreigners, especially Americans, because intolerance is alien to their tribal culture.

At some point the media will have to desert the seven-party circus in Pakistan and focus on the commanders of these two parties. (Some of the media, including CBS News, already have.) When that happens, the war in Afghanistan will stop being an exiles' civil war in Pakistan.

ROBERT D. KAPLAN

Robert D. Kaplan, an Athens-based writer, is the author of a forthcoming book on Ethiopia to be published by Westview Press.

The costs are still too high.

DON'T LEGALIZE DRUGS

THE NEXT TIME you hear that a drunk driver has slammed into a school bus full of children or that a stoned railroad engineer has killed 16 people in a train wreck, think about this: if the advocates of legalized drugs have their way, there will be more of this, a lot more. There will also be more unpublicized fatal and maiming crashes, more job accidents, more child neglect, more of almost everything associated with substance abuse: babies born addicted or retarded, teenagers zonked out of their chance for an education, careers destroyed, families wrecked, and people dead of overdoses.

The proponents of drug legalization are right to say that some things will get better. Organized crime will be driven out of the drug business, and there will be a sharp drop in the amount of money (currently about $10 billion per year) that society spends to enforce the drug laws. There will be some reduction in the cost in theft and injury (now about $20 billion) by addicts to get the money to buy prohibited drugs. Internationally, Latin American governments presumably will stop being menaced by drug cartels and will peaceably export cocaine as they now do coffee.

However, this is virtually the limit of the social benefits

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to be derived from legalization, and they are far outweighed by the costs, which are always underplayed by legalization advocates such as the *Economist*, Princeton scholar Ethan A. Nadelmann (see "Shooting Up," TNR, June 13), economist Milton Friedman and other libertarians, columnists William F. Buckley and Richard Cohen, and Mayors Keith Schmoke of Baltimore and Marion Barry of Washington, D.C. In lives, money, and human woe, the costs are so high, in fact, that society has no alternative but to conduct a real war on the drug trade, although perhaps a smarter one than is currently being waged.

ADVOCATES OF legalization love to draw parallels between the drug war and Prohibition. Their point, of course, is that this crusade is as doomed to failure as the last one was, and that we ought to surrender now to the inevitable and stop wasting resources. But there are some important differences between drugs and alcohol. Alcohol has been part of Western culture for thousands of years; drugs have been the rage in America only since about 1962. Of the 115 million Americans who consume alcohol, 85 percent rarely become intoxicated; with drugs, intoxication is the whole idea. Alcohol is consistent chemically, even though it's dispensed in different strengths and forms as beer, wine, and "hard" liquor; with drugs there's no limit to the variations. Do we legalize crack along with snortable cocaine, PCPs as well as marijuana, and LSD and "Ecstasy" as well as heroin? If we don't—and almost certainly we won't—we have a black market, and some continued crime.

But Prohibition is a useful historical parallel for measuring the costs of legalization. Almost certainly doctors are not going to want to write prescriptions for recreational use of harmful substances, so if drugs ever are legalized they will be dispensed as alcohol now is—in government-regulated stores with restrictions on the age of buyers, warnings against abuse (and, probably, with added restrictions on amounts, though this also will create a black market).

In the decade before Prohibition went into effect in 1920, alcohol consumption in the United States averaged 2.6 gallons per person per year. It fell to 0.73 gallons during the Prohibition decade, then doubled to 1.5 gallons in the decade after repeal, and is now back to 2.6 gallons. So illegality suppressed usage to a third or a fourth of its former level. At the same time, incidence of cirrhosis of the liver fell by half.

So it seems fair to estimate that use of drugs will at least double, and possibly triple, if the price is cut, supplies are readily available, and society's sanction is lifted. It's widely accepted that there are now 16 million regular users of marijuana, six million of cocaine, a half million of heroin, and another half million of other drugs, totaling 23 million. Dr. Robert DuPont, former director of the National Institutes of Drug Abuse and an anti-legalization crusader, says that the instant pleasure afforded by drugs—superior to that available with alcohol—will increase the number of regular users of marijuana and cocaine to about 50 or 60 million and heroin users to ten million.

Between ten percent and 15 percent of all drinkers turn into alcoholics (ten million to 17 million), and these drinkers cost the economy an estimated $117 billion in 1983 ($15 billion for treatment, $89 billion in lost productivity, and $13 billion in accident-related costs). About 200,000 people died last year as a result of alcohol abuse, about 25,000 in auto accidents. How many drug users will turn into addicts, and what will this cost? According to President Reagan's drug abuse policy adviser, Dr. David I. McDonald, studies indicate that marijuana is about as habit-forming as alcohol, but for cocaine, 70 percent of users become addicted, as many as with nicotine.

So it seems reasonable to conclude that at least four to six million people will become potheads if marijuana is legal, and that coke addicts will number somewhere between 8.5 million (if regular usage doubles and 70 percent become addicted) and 42 million (if DuPont's high estimate of use is correct). An optimist would have to conclude that the number of people abusing legalized drugs will come close to those hooked on alcohol. A pessimist would figure the human damage as much greater.

Another way of figuring costs is this: the same study (by the Research Triangle Institute of North Carolina) that put the price of alcoholism at $117 billion in 1983 figured the cost of drug abuse then at $60 billion—$15 billion for law enforcement and crime, and $45 billion in lost productivity, damaged health, and other costs. The updated estimate for 1988 drug abuse is $100 billion. If legalizing drugs would save $30 billion now being spent on law enforcement and crime, a doubling of use and abuse means that other costs will rise to $140 billion or $210 billion. This is no bargain for society.

If 200,000 people die every year from alcohol abuse and 320,000 from tobacco smoking, how many will die from legal drugs? Government estimates are that 4,000 to 5,000 people a year are killed in drug-related auto crashes, but this is surely low because accident victims are not as routinely blood-tested for drugs as for alcohol. Legalization advocates frequently cite figures of 3,600 or 4,100 as the number of drug deaths each year reported by hospitals, but this number too is certainly an understatement, based on reports from only 75 big hospitals in 27 metropolitan areas.

If legalization pushed the total number of drug addicts to only half the number of alcoholics, 100,000 people a year would die. That's the figure cited by McDonald. DuPont guesses that, given the potency of drugs, the debilitating effects of cocaine, the carcinogenic effects of marijuana, and the AIDS potential of injecting legalized heroin, the number of deaths actually could go as high as 500,000 a year. That's a wide range, but it's clear that legalization of drugs will not benefit human life.

All studies show that those most likely to try drugs, get hooked, and die—as opposed to those who suffer from cirrhosis and lung cancer—are young people, who are susceptible to the lure of quick thrills and are terribly adaptable to messages provided by adult society. Under pressure of the current prohibition, the number of kids who use illegal drugs at least once a month has fallen from

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39 percent in the late 1970s to 25 percent in 1987, according to the annual survey of high school seniors conducted by the University of Michigan. The same survey shows that attitudes toward drug use have turned sharply negative. But use of legal drugs is still strong. Thirty-eight percent of high school seniors reported getting drunk within the past two weeks, and 27 percent said they smoke cigarettes every day. Drug prohibition is working with kids; legalization would do them harm.

And, even though legalization would lower direct costs for drug law enforcement, it's unlikely that organized crime would disappear. It might well shift to other fields—prostitution, pornography, gambling or burglaries, extortion, and murders-for-hire—much as it did in the period between the end of Prohibition and the beginning of the drug era. As DuPont puts it, "Organized crime is in the business of giving people the things that society decides in its own interest to prohibit. The only way to get rid of organized crime is to make everything legal." Even legalization advocates such as Ethan Nadelmann admit that some street crimes will continue to occur as a result of drug abuse—especially cocaine paranoia, PCP insanity, and the need of unemployable addicts to get money for drugs. Domestic crime, child abuse and neglect surely would increase.

Some legalization advocates suggest merely decriminalizing marijuana and retaining sanctions against other drugs. This would certainly be less costly than total legalization, but it would still be no favor to young people, would increase traffic accidents and productivity losses—and would do nothing to curtail the major drug cartels, which make most of their money trafficking in cocaine.

Legalizers also argue that the government could tax legal drug sales and use the money to pay for anti-drug education programs and treatment centers. But total taxes collected right now from alcohol sales at the local, state, and federal levels come to only $13.1 billion per year—which is a pittance compared with the damage done to society as a result of alcohol abuse. The same would have to be true for drugs—and any tax that resulted in an official drug price that was higher than the street price would open the way once again for black markets and organized crime.

SO, IN THE name of health, economics, and morality, there seems no alternative but to keep drugs illegal and to fight the criminals who traffic in them. Regardless of what legalization advocates say, this is now the overwhelming opinion of the public, the Reagan administration, the prospective candidates for president, and the Congress—not one of whose members has introduced legislation to decriminalize any drug. Congress is on the verge of forcing the administration to raise anti-drug spending next year from $3 billion to $5.5 billion.

There is, though, room to debate how best to wage this war. A consensus is developing that it has to be done both on the supply side (at overseas points of origin, through interdiction at U.S. borders and criminal prosecution of traffickers) and on the demand side (by discouraging use of drugs through education and treatment and/or by arrest and urine testing at workplaces). However, there is a disagreement about which side to emphasize and how to spend resources. Members of Congress, especially Democrats, want to blame foreigners and the Reagan administration for the fact that increasing amounts of cocaine, heroin, and marijuana are entering the country. They want to spend more money on foreign aid, use the U.S. military to seal the borders, and fund "nice" treatment and education programs, especially those that give ongoing support to professional social welfare agencies.

Conservatives, on the other hand, want to employ the military to help foreign countries stamp out drug laboratories, use widespread drug testing to identify—and, often, punish—drug users, and spend more on police and prisons. As Education Secretary William Bennett puts it, "How can we surrender when we've never actually fought the war?" Bennett wants to fight it across all fronts, and those who have seen drafts of a forthcoming report of the White House Conference for a Drug Free America say this will be the approach recommended by the administration, although with muted emphasis on use of the U.S. military, which is reluctant to get involved in what may be another thankless war.

HOWEVER, DuPont and others, including Jeffrey Eisenach of the Heritage Foundation, make a strong case that primary emphasis ought to be put on the demand side—discouraging use in the United States rather than, almost literally, trying to become the world's policeman. Their argument, bolstered by a study conducted by Peter Reuter of the RAND Corporation, is that major profits in the drug trade are not made abroad (where the price of cocaine triples from farm to airstrip), but within the United States (where the markup from entry point to street corner is 12 times), and that foreign growing fields and processing laboratories are easily replaceable at low cost.

They say that prohibition policy should emphasize routine random urine testing in schools and places of employment, arrests for possession of drugs, and "coercive" treatment programs that compel continued enrollment as a condition of probation and employment. DuPont thinks that corporations have a right to demand that their employees be drug-free because users cause accidents and reduce productivity. He contends that urine testing is no more invasive than the use of metal detectors at airports.

"Liberals have a terrible time with this," says DuPont. "They want to solve every problem by giving people things. They want to love people out of their problems, while conservatives want to punish it out of them. What we want to do is take the profits out of drugs by drying up demand. You do that by raising the social cost of using them to the point where people say, 'I don't want to do this.' This isn't conservative. It's a way to save lives."

It is, and it's directly parallel to the way society is dealing with drunk driving and cigarette smoking—not merely through advertising campaigns and surgeon general's warnings, but through increased penalties, social stric-

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tures—and prohibitions. Random testing for every employee in America may be going too far, but testing those holding sensitive jobs or workers involved in accidents surely isn't, nor is arresting users, lifting driver's licenses, and requiring treatment. These are not nosy, moralistic intrusions on people's individual rights, but attempts by society to protect itself from danger.

In the end, they are also humane and moral. There is a chance, with the public and policy-makers aroused to action, that ten years from now drug abuse might be reduced to its pre-1960s levels. Were drugs to be legalized now, we would be establishing a new vice—one that, over time, would end or ruin millions of lives. Worse yet, we would be establishing a pattern of doing the easy thing, surrendering, whenever confronted with a difficult challenge.

MORTON M. KONDRACKE

Conservative judicial activism.

'TAKING' LIBERTIES

IN RECENT YEARS conservative complaints about "judicial activism" have sounded increasingly hollow. Conservative legal scholars are now excited about the possibility of imposing their own ideological agenda through the courts. With a chief justice and three associate justices appointed by President Reagan, the Rehnquist Court shows some early symptoms of conservative judicial activism. The main focus of this activism is an attempt to read free market economics into the Constitution, overruling economic regulations enacted (rightly or wrongly) by the democratic branches of government.

The conservative judicial activists' preferred instrument is the so-called "taking clause" of the Fifth Amendment: "... nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation." The Framers meant that the government has to reimburse people when it seizes property for roads and the like. But government actions can affect the value of private property, even destroy that value, without actually taking the property away. In a famous opinion by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, the Court held that an unconstitutional "taking" could exist if the government "went too far" in regulating the uses of private property.

Although the Holmes opinion is 70 years old, the Supreme Court has only recently discovered that a good many regulations of private property "go too far." In one case, for instance, the federal government claimed that the public had the right to use a marina because a private developer had connected it with a public waterway. The Supreme Court held that giving the public access to the marina would be an unconstitutional taking of the developer's property. In another case Congress was concerned because some Indian lands had so many owners that managing the lands became impractical. As a way of consolidating land holdings, a federal statute mandated that some of the tiniest interests would revert to the tribe on the owners' deaths. This too was an unconstitutional taking. The Court also found a taking when New York required landlords to give their tenants access to cable. The reason was that the cable box would "take" some of the space on the building's roof.

THE MOST IMPORTANT recent taking decision came last year. The *Nollan* case involved a California couple who wanted to build a larger beach house. As a condition of granting a building permit, the California Coastal Commission required them to allow the public to walk along the beach. Apparently the owners didn't really care one way or the other about pedestrian traffic along the beach, since a wall separated that part of the beach from their yard. But they objected in principle to the permit condition. With the help of the Pacific Legal Foundation, a right-wing legal group, they took the case to the Supreme Court. The Court agreed that the permit condition was a taking.

The majority opinion was written by Justice Antonin Scalia, who has emerged as the strongest economic activist on the Rehnquist Court. (Liberals let Scalia slide through while concentrating their fire on William Rehnquist's nomination as chief justice. This may have been a mistake.) Scalia examined the permit condition with microscopic intensity. He conceded, at least for purposes of argument, that California could have banned the construction entirely. The state, he conceded, also could have mandated public access from the street to the beach across the Nollans' property. But the requirement of lateral access across the beach itself was unconstitutional. Lateral access just wasn't closely enough related to the government's right to protect the public view of the ocean. In short, California could establish public access routes perpendicular to the shoreline, but the Constitution prohibited routes parallel to shore.

A zoning expert called *Nollan* the "best news California landowners have had in generations." Major land developers were also exuberant. Zoning authorities often put conditions on approval for new subdivisions and other major projects. Scalia's opinion seemed to promise that courts would take a very suspicious attitude toward these conditions. He referred to them in his decision as a possible form of "extortion."

Environmentalists were dismayed by the decision. Government protection of coastal areas and wetlands has led to considerable "takings" litigation in the lower courts, with mixed results. Attempts to preserve estuaries and marshes can require strict limits on development, which some state courts have held to be unconstitutional. The *Nollan* decision seems to be an ominous sign about the Court's attitude in future cases.

Nollan came shortly after another ominous Supreme Court "taking" decision. Until 1987, if a government regulation was held to be an unconstitutional taking, the regu-

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lation was struck down and that was the end of it. But the Court held last year that in such cases the property owner is also entitled to damages for the past harm caused by the unconstitutional regulation. Thus the government may owe developers a lot of money if it guesses wrong about what kinds of permit conditions the Supreme Court will uphold. Developers liked this one too. Taking claims totaling more than $1 billion have already been filed in federal court.

For liberals, these cases brought back bitter memories of the Supreme Court's last bout of conservative activism, which ended early in the New Deal. The symbol of that era was a case called *Lochner*, in which the Supreme Court struck down a New York law mandating a 60-hour maximum work week for bakers. According to the *Lochner* Court, the law deprived bakers of their constitutional "freedom of contract" to work as many hours a week as they wanted.

ALTHOUGH *Lochner* horrifies mainstream law professors, it now has a formidable defender in Richard Epstein of the University of Chicago Law School. Epstein—who views himself as a libertarian, not a conservative—makes no secret of his approval of *Lochner*. In his recent book, *Takings*, he argues that the courts should strike down the National Labor Relations Act, the minimum wage, occupational safety legislation, the progressive income tax, and most other 20th-century legislation. In principle, he thinks that Social Security and state welfare laws are also unconstitutional, but he realizes that as a practical matter it may be too late to abolish them. In short, according to Epstein, the entire welfare state is a violation of the taking clause.

Epstein's extremism has less to do with politics than with current academic fashions. Like leading legal scholars today across the political spectrum, he believes that theory is a lot more important than common sense. "It takes a theory to beat a theory," he likes to say.

Epstein's passion for logic may take him to extremes, but the core of his theory is far from crazy. He is willing to admit that governments are capable of doing good things. He simply doesn't think this happens very often. He believes the government is much more likely to cater to special interests than to serve the public interest. He wants clear rules limiting government action because he sees no reason to waste time trying to distinguish a few good laws from the many special interest rip-offs.

Epstein's morbid view of politics is shared by many scholars in the field called "public choice theory." Public choice involves the use of economic methods to analyze political problems. One of the basic public choice theorems holds that in political battles involving a few people with a lot individually at stake on one side versus a lot of people with small individual stakes on the other, the few will win because they will be better organized. Thus special interests triumph over consumers and taxpayers.

Epstein is not the only scholar to connect this kind of skepticism about government action with increased judicial review of economic legislation. But Epstein paints too dark a picture. Surprising as this may seem, political scientists and economists even have statistical evidence that legislators sometimes pursue the public interest, rather than responding only to narrow political pressures. Most legislation probably results from a complex combination of special interest pleading, political calculation, and public spiritedness.

The taking clause is an unpromising basis for sorting out good government regulations from bad ones. Special interests are no more likely to seek restrictions on property use than on other economic activities. What principled reason is there, for example, for courts to strike down rent controls while upholding minimum wages, just because one involves property and the other involves labor?

Having started down the "takings" road, the Court need not go all the way to Epsteinism. There are plenty of reasonable stopping grounds. All of the laws that the Court has struck down so far, for example, belong to a limited category of situations: those in which the government gives *somebody else* the right to use the property. For example, in *Nollan* other beachgoers got the right to use the Nollans' beach; in the Indian case the tribe got the right to use the property after the owner's death; and in the cable case, the cable company got the right to use the landlord's roof. Permission to cross someone else's property, as in the *Nollan* case, is itself an established legal property right known as an "easement." The intrusions overturned in the other cases involve similar established categories. It does not take much imagination to see the forced transfer of a specific property right as a "taking." But this is quite distinct from most forms of government regulation, which address the owner's activities rather than transferring a property right to others.

NEVERTHELESS, the Court's "taking" opinions contain a good deal of loose talk about property and government regulation. So there's still good reason to be nervous about what happens next. In February the Court declined to strike down a San Jose rent control ordinance. It specifically upheld the general concept of rent control, but not necessarily a particular provision in the San Jose ordinance, which allows the tenant's poverty to be considered in setting rents. This provision makes the ordinance look more like simple redistribution from landlords to tenants—and therefore more like a "taking." The majority said this provision must be applied to a particular landlord before its constitutionality could be judged. Justices Scalia and Sandra Day O'Connor dissented on the ground that the mere existence of the hardship provision was an unconstitutional taking. A few weeks later the Court declined to review another rent control case, in which the lower court had struck down a Santa Barbara ordinance applying to mobile park homes.

So the current judicial doctrine seems to be that rent control is constitutional, unless it involves mobile homes or possibly unless it contains a hardship provision for the poor. This hardly represents a return to the *Lochner* era. On the other hand, it's unlikely that anyone on the Warren

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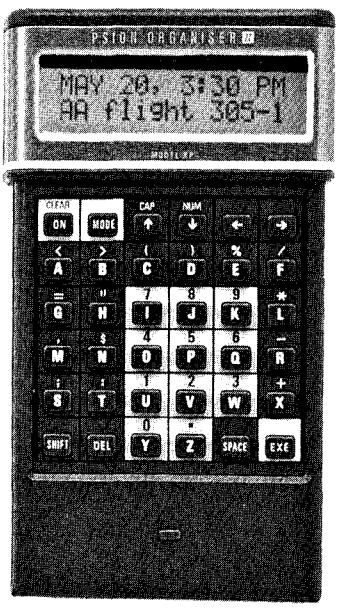

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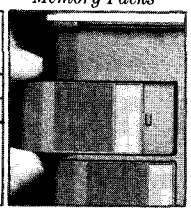

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Court would have been especially troubled because an otherwise constitutional law took into account the hardships of the poor. As in some other areas of constitutional law, all we can say is that there has been a definite shift to the right in the Rehnquist Court. Historians may later see this as a minor aberration or the beginning of a constitutional counterrevolution. It all depends on the next few Supreme Court appointments.

DANIEL A. FARBER

Daniel A. Farber is Henry J. Fletcher Professor of Law at the University of Minnesota.

History's verdict.

DO DEMOCRATS START WARS?

SENATOR BOB DOLE, in his bad old pre-statesman days when he was a Republican hatchet man, used to refer with his characteristic sneer to "Democrat wars." At the 1984 Republican convention Barry Goldwater, the fundamentalist prototype from which Ronald Reagan was modeled, exhumed the ancient Republican charge that every American war of the 20th century had been started by a Democratic president.

Democrats the war party? Ridiculous. But wait a minute. Could it be that there is some truth in this old saw after all? Can there perhaps be a special connection between Democrats and war?

It was not a Republican but one of the most prominent and faithful of all living Democrats, John Kenneth Galbraith, who once observed that "wars, just or unjust, have come with devastating regularity every time the Democrats have enjoyed power." And consider that in this century we have had six Democratic presidents and nine Republicans. Five of the six Democrats led the nation into war: Wilson into World War I, Franklin Roosevelt into World War II, Truman into Korea, Kennedy and Johnson into Vietnam. None of the Republicans did. Two of the Republicans, Eisenhower and Nixon, ended wars inherited from their Democratic predecessors.

Perhaps anyone who was president at a critical time would have made the same decisions. You could argue that none of these wars could have been avoided. But is that true?

Wilson claimed that he could "do no other" when he called for a declaration of war against imperial Germany in April 1917. In fact, he could have resisted pressure to become involved in what he himself had earlier described as a war for which both sides were to blame and that was more about spoils than about principles.

Franklin Roosevelt, by popular consensus, was a great president and wartime leader. But he also pursued a policy, in both the Atlantic and the Pacific, that circumvented the neutrality laws and was meant to draw the nation into war. He deserves our gratitude for alerting the nation to resist the evil that was Nazi Germany. Yet under another president the United States might at least have avoided a costly war with Japan. And had we not destroyed the Japanese power, we never would have later gone halfway around the world to fight wars in Korea and Vietnam.

Harry Truman intervened when North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950 because it never occurred to him to stay out. His advisers, particularly Secretary of State Dean Acheson, had told him that the war in Korea was orchestrated by the Russians, and that if they got away with it there, they would soon gobble up all of Europe. Truman, who remembered Munich and believed that Stalin was Hitler all over again, took his advice. Some 33,000 GIs died over the next three years until Dwight Eisenhower called it quits.

The intervention in Korea was a reflex action. Vietnam was a calculated decision. Neither history nor economic involvement nor an overwhelming national interest pushed the United States into Vietnam's civil war. John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson did. Kennedy called Vietnam the "keystone to the arch," the "finger in the dike" against the global spread of communism. And Johnson said that Americans were fighting Vietnamese because "what we've got they want."

Officials of both administrations had difficulty explaining exactly how the safety and well-being of Americans were threatened by North Vietnam, and gave contradictory reasons to justify American involvement. In fact if ever there was a liberal war, one tailor-made for the Democrats, it was Vietnam. There they saw a wonderful laboratory to translate their inflated rhetoric into reality: to pursue their dreams of "nation-building," to construct their models of economic "takeoff" as an alternative to Communist-led nationalist insurrections. But when the natives proved recalcitrant, they fought their war of noble intentions with napalm, Agent Orange, and search-and-destroy missions.

ARE REPUBLICANS, then, less belligerent than Democrats? Probably not, at least in principle and rhetoric. They seem just as prone to muscle-flexing and have no aversion to launching colonial expeditions. They are not at all sentimental about force. Indeed, they enjoy cracking heads in unruly backwaters—such as Reagan's raids on Libya, his proxy wars in Central America, Angola, Afghanistan, and Cambodia, and his gunboat diplomacy in the Gulf.

But these really are minor operations as far as the United States is concerned. For all the talk of his "doctrine," with its trills and homages to anti-Communist "freedom fighters," Reagan has been quite content to let others do his fighting for him. What this suggests is that Republicans are more prone to noisy denunciations and cheap colonial interventions, Democrats to lofty moralizing and assertive demonstrations of national power.

Republicans and Democrats share a fondness for ritual-

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istic denunciations of Moscow. Both eagerly sacrifice domestic needs to grandiose foreign policy goals. But Democrats have actually acted on their rhetoric by leading the nation into war, while Republicans haven't.

Although Carter, the fourth and so far last of the cold war Democratic presidents, managed to avoid involving the nation in war, he responded to Moscow's blundering attempt to bring the unruly border state of Afghanistan under control as though it were the declaration of World War III. Though the invasion of Afghanistan was a nasty, imperialistic action for which the Soviets have paid dearly, it was no more threatening to the security of the United States than American harassment of Nicaragua is to the Soviet Union. Yet Carter, evoking the specter of a Soviet invasion of the Middle East, set up a military strike force for the Persian Gulf and launched the biggest U.S. nuclear buildup since Kennedy's own nearly 20 years earlier. Having come into office decrying an "inordinate fear of communism," he left having intensified it.

Not only have Republicans not taken the nation into war, they have also struck deals with Communist nations that probably would have been impossible for Democrats. Truman, for example, refused to end the Korean War with a stalemated truce, as Eisenhower did. Though Kennedy did get a partial nuclear test ban treaty through the Senate, it was Nixon who worked out the more complex SALT I accords and reversed 20 years of U.S. hostility toward Beijing. This is something neither Johnson nor Kennedy would have ever dared. Nixon even made a stab at opening links to Cuba. Similarly, only Reagan, with his impeccable anti-Communist credentials, could have gotten the Senate to endorse an INF treaty that removes a powerful American missile force from Europe.

WHY IS IT that Democrats tend to get the nation involved in wars that Republicans mostly just talk about, and that Republicans actually work out the deals that Democrats only dream about? There seem to be two reasons.

First, liberals itch with schemes to reform the world. Like religious fundamentalists, they find it impossible to rest until they have made everyone like themselves. Conviction drives them to action. The very notion of possessing power and choosing not to exercise it would give a Democrat a nervous breakdown. In this sense Korea and Vietnam were hardly choices at all; they were virtually inevitable Democratic wars.

Second, if cold war liberals are genetically prone to intervention, they also are ill-equipped to come to terms with their adversaries—even when they want to do so. A major reason for this is obvious. The Republicans wouldn't let them. It has often been said that only Nixon could have opened diplomatic ties to Beijing, because only he wouldn't have Nixon on his right charging him with treason.

This is true, and no doubt unfair. Why should Republicans be able to get away with the things that Democrats yearn for but do not dare? Nixon bombs Hanoi, works out deals with Brezhnev, and is received as Emperor of the West by Mao Zedong. Reagan spends his first term denouncing the "evil empire" and his second socializing with the Gorbachevs. Meanwhile, the Democrats go down in history books as the ones who raise taxes and send American boys off to get killed.

It may be unfair, but there it is. Which raises the troubling question: If Democrats are better at getting into fights, and Republicans at ending them, what is a conscientious voter to do this year? The answer depends on what you think the problem is. If the issue is how to stand tough against Moscow, then the Democrats are the party best equipped by tradition to do so. They will keep the defense budget high, retain American troops in Europe, Korea, and everywhere else, and reject any serious cuts in the nuclear arms race. Democrats would rather raise taxes or start a war than be called wimps.

If, on the other hand, you think that Gorbachev is serious—that, because of his need to reform Soviet society and reduce the military drain on his nation's resources, it might now be possible to negotiate a guarded truce in the cold war—then experience dictates that the Republicans are better equipped to do so.

Could a Democratic president sign a treaty like the INF or cut strategic missiles by half? Could he get it through the Senate? Would he be willing to pull most of the U.S. troops out of Germany in order to get the Russians out of Eastern Europe? Would he dare work out a deal with isolated Marxist countries like Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, and Angola that would reduce their dependency on Moscow? Or would he be too afraid of being called "soft on communism"?

Michael Dukakis, an able and committed liberal, no doubt—assuming he is the party's presidential nominee—would sincerely like to wind down the cold war and concentrate on redressing the neglected social needs and fiscal irresponsibility of the Reagan years. But would he be able to cut loose from the cold war shibboleths that have always manacled the Democrats? Above all, would he be able to resist the pressures of cold war fundamentalists within his own party, let alone among the Republicans? This is what crippled Carter. Has American politics evolved to the point where any middle-of-the-road Democrat could do any better?

It takes considerable courage, or at least independence, for any Democrat even to talk about rethinking the terms of the cold war—more courage than any presidential candidate, except Jesse Jackson, has shown. And Jackson's "heresies"—which are far more cautious than Gorbachev's, and even than some of Reagan's—are not considered "responsible" by party leaders and their media minions. For a Republican, all it takes to strike a deal with Communists is the willingness to seize an opportunity—as Nixon showed and now Reagan is doing.

Ironically, then, it may take a Republican to do what most Democratic voters want but no Democratic president is likely to dare: to wind down the cold war. There is no guarantee that such a Republican would, but no persuasive evidence that a mainstream Democrat even might.

RONALD STEEL

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Danse Macabre

Evelyn Waugh's masterpiece *A Handful of Dust* has been made into a beautiful film. Its first achievement is its dazzling use of a prime Waugh technique, the cinematic method that threads through the novel. This term may seem odd for an author who was snooty about films; nonetheless, he used two devices that must be called cinematic—interweaving

A Handful of Dust
(New Line)

of narrative strands and rigorous selectivity. The first point needs no explanation; the second entails not only the most precise choice of scenes and "angles" but the intensified selection of details *within* a scene. Those two elements unite powerfully in this film.

Top honors then to Charles Sturridge, the director, and Peter Coulson, the editor. Sturridge, best known here for his BBC-TV series *Brideshead Revisited*, and Coulson, whose main experience has been in British TV, have fashioned a film that in aspect and dynamics is close to the tight, implicitly tragic being of the original. One sequence in the novel was called by Brigid Brophy "one of the miracles of English fiction"; inevitably, this is the test sequence of the film, a test that Sturridge and Coulson pass triumphantly.

Lady Brenda Last is in London, whirling socially in early 1930s fashion. (I'm not about to synopsize a classic, but some reminders may help.) Her lover, John Beaver, is abroad at the moment. Her small son, John Andrew, is killed in a hunting accident down at their country place. Her husband, Tony, sends a friend, Jock, up to London with the news so that Brenda won't have to hear it on the telephone. When she hears the name "John," she thinks it's her lover who is dead, and she is desolate; then she understands that it's her son, and she says "Thank God." Waugh lays out the sequence, between London and the manor house, in blocks. Sturridge and Coulson fragment those blocks, then splice them dialectically with rising rhythm. That rhythmic energy, surrounding the terse action and speech, increases the tension. It's masterly.

The mastery is heightened by George Fenton's music, which uses a "native" flute in this sequence—an instrument associated with the Indians of the Brazilian jungle where Tony Last ends up. Thus, subliminally, the ultimate result of that sequence is foretold.

For all the film's fine use of Waugh's cinematics, I must not imply that it's Eisensteinian, a sheer cumulation of fragments, any more than the novel is. The fragmentation is used only when the story needs to be taken forward simultaneously in more than one place. Mostly Sturridge uses the camera as an inquirer, often opening a sequence with a slow pan that seems to be searching out the heart of the matter. Example: we hear Jock reading the letter that Brenda has sent to Tony, breaking off their marriage. The camera picks up Jock, then slowly crosses the room to Tony, who is looking out the window, listening to the letter he has allowed Jock to read. That camera movement creates sympathy between them and compassion in us.

A low bow, logically, to Peter Hannan, the cinematographer. He not only does well by the film's equivalent of "photo opportunities" (for instance, a long shot of Brighton pier), he can catch the quality of English air. He can dramatize the start of a fox hunt. With Sturridge at the helm, Hannan makes that hunt a pageant—of people engaged gravely in something basically ridiculous because it's a clutch at cultural survival.

The screenplay is by Sturridge, Tim Sullivan, and Derek Granger. I wish they had retained the book's epigraph from *The Waste Land*, which sets a tone for the work and secures the title. ("I will show you fear in a handful of dust.") But on the whole, though some details might be different, the adaptation could not be much improved. The fox symbols of the novel are italicized a bit. The fact of Brenda's remarriage is unclear. On the other hand, the inserted opening sequence—Tony's fantasy in the Brazilian jungle where he will finish up—is helpful. In the novel, the jungle finish comes as a surprise. This doesn't make the novel schizoid (a familiar and superficial criticism): the surprise of the ending reinforces the idea that brutalization of decency follows Tony wherever he goes, even into upland Brazil. But for the film, the new prelude provides a strong start and, in retrospect, provides the first arm of a closure. (Before we cry "tampering," we might remember that Waugh himself wrote a happy ending for the novel's American magazine publication. The film's prelude is much more in key than that.)

Other bits of the book have been necessarily condensed or omitted, other choices might have been made for condensation or omission, but the three adapters have acutely kept balance. That balance is greatly helped by the casting, not least in the supporting roles. The vivid performances maintain the trim. Judi Dench, as the sharp-eyed Mrs. Beaver; Pip Torrens, as Jock; Graham Crowden, as Tony's purse-lipped solicitor; Stephen Fry, as Brenda's smarmy brother; Beatie Edney, as her gamey sister; Christopher Godwin, as the breezy jungle explorer, a real English nut—all of them play as if, in the

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Rikky and Pete. Australian comedy. A sister and brother, in their 20s, escape domineering dad and find amusing adventures. Credibility is not meant to be a strong point. (Reviewed 6/20/88)

A Taxing Woman. Whiplash direction and smart acting. Keen satire about a woman tax inspector in Tokyo. (5/2/88)

White Mischief. What makes us care about the sex, scandal, and murder in Kenyan aristos in 1941 is the stylish acting and dialogue. (4/11/88)

Wings of Desire. Peter Handke's screenplay, about an angel seeking mortality in Berlin, is more imaginative than Wim Wenders's direction. Still, a lyrical work. (5/23/88)

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best sense, the film were about *them*. The concept of "supporting role" is not in their minds.

Of Alec Guinness, as the jungle resident who loves Dickens, it need only be said that Guinness knows a plum when he sees one and knows how to savor it delicately. Anjelica Huston plays Mrs. Rattery, the straightforward American cosmopolite who is a guest in Tony's house when his son is killed. Huston's performance confirms that she is a potentially major actress on her way.

Rupert Graves, familiar from *A Room with a View* and *Maurice*, plays John Beaver as a non-comic Bertie Wooster, which is just right. He seems both pathetic, as Brenda describes him, and a credible object of her amorous interest. Both Brenda and Tony are competently done, but they are the only roles I can imagine being done better. Kristin Scott Thomas, the Brenda, is a newcomer to American screens. Though a few lines of her dialogue stick to her aristocratic soft palate, she is brisk and brittle and moving when she must be. What she lacks is diamond glitter, the irresistible fascination of a Titania in her Belgravia fairyland. James Wilby is far more engaging as Tony than he was as Maurice in that film, with plenty of the requisite decency and reticence. Only the very last (decently reticent) measure of tragic depth is missing.

According to one story, when Waugh was a young man living in Hampstead, he used to mail his letters in Mayfair so that they would bear a W.1 postmark. The story deserves to be true because it foretells what, in extenso, his letters did for him later: they enabled a solidly middle-class man to move in high society. His correspondence, interesting in many ways, reveals him climbing upward and using his writing to do it.

Well, he did it to our good. His novels, fixed familiarly in an upper stratum into which he was not born, use that upper world for satire impossible elsewhere and for comedy that, rightly read, makes Spengler seem cheerful. But *A Handful of Dust* is not a comedy; comically glinting though it is, it's a tragedy. Waugh wrote to Henry Green: "The scheme was a Gothic man in the hands of savages." The temperamentally medieval man, living in a Gothic manor house, falls into the hands of savages at home, then abroad. Simple faith is betrayed at every turn by the self-centered. Sturridge's film finds that tragic theme and embodies it exquisitely. □

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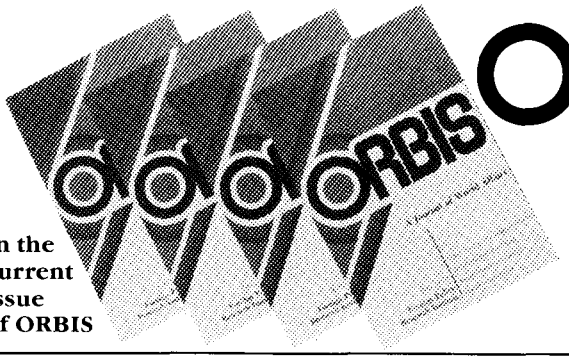

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ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

The Limits of the Auteur

Among the most hotly debated questions of modernism is its relation to the past. Does modernist culture represent an unprecedented break with history? Has the modern artist confiscated the territory formerly occupied by tradition and authority? The sociologist Daniel Bell, one of the few American intellectuals still concerned with thinking about culture, has just written a paper on "The Contradictions of Modernity and Modernism," which may arouse the few Americans still concerned with ideas about culture, for it is a closely reasoned attack on the most cherished assumptions of modernist art.

The Cherry Orchard
by Anton Chekhov
(Arena Stage)

Defining "the modern" as a "readiness, if not eagerness, to welcome the new, even at the expense of tradition and the past," Bell goes on to excoriate a culture in which "the aesthetic separates itself from the moral, and the impulse to experiment and explore, to go to the depths of the new, knows no boundaries, the sensuous and the shocking have no restraints, there is 'nothing sacred.'" Bell charges the modernist artist with rejecting classical order, symmetry, and proportion. "The ego/self takes the throne as the center of the moral universe, making itself the arbiter of all decisions," and this results in the "diremption of *mimesis*, the shattering of the mirror of nature, particularly in art."

Bell's assault on modernism uses the artillery of philosophy, history, and politics, particularly (and curiously, considering his conservative cultural stance) the politics of liberalism. Arguing that liberalism could provide the basis for a culture that draws deeply on the ethical traditions of the West, he chides modernism for exercising rights without obligations. Bell concedes that rationalistic liberal culture is mundane and lacks a sense of the sacred, but he nonetheless implores the artist to return to traditional roots: "It is the recognition by the individual that he does not come out of himself but is the son of his father, with the obligation to redeem . . . the inheritance he has received."

Bell is correct in noting that modernist art (regardless of the artist's private politics) is not often an expression of liberalism. But is it also correct to call the creations of, say, Joyce, Picasso, or Brecht—or of countless other modernists dedicated to reworking classical art—a breach with the world of our fathers? Quite the contrary, few artistic movements in history have been so deeply submerged in the literature and art of the past. Admittedly, these traditional works, whether Homer's *Odyssey* or Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, or Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, are likely to appear in radically revised forms—but artists do not redeem a paternal inheritance through mechanical imitation.

It is true that *postmodern* art is often devoted to Bell's "diremption of *mimesis*" and "shattering of the mirror of nature," but even this highly independent movement has lately been giving way, in theater at least, to a new involvement with classical texts. Heiner Mueller reconstructs *Hamlet* and the Greeks; Robert Wilson has been returning to Euripides and Shakespeare; Richard Foreman investigates Molière; Lee Breuer and Tadashi Suzuki (and Wilson) have been exploring *King Lear*; and the Romanian directors—Ciulei, Serban, Pintilie—are continually returning to Chekhov, Ibsen, Shakespeare, Molière, Gozzi, and countless other classical authors.

A more relevant question to ask about these postmodern artists is whether the "ego/self" has transformed the works beyond recognition. At what point does a director's approach to the classics fade into authorship? How much conceptual weight can a play bear before it loses its original shape and becomes another object entirely? Such judgments are entirely subjective, and complicated by the fact that some "interpretations" are clearly intended as fresh creative acts. But most auteur directors genuinely believe they are releasing the original impulses of the plays they direct from the conventions of traditional production, and would vigorously defend their concepts of "faithful" realizations of a playwright's intention, seen anew through modern eyes.

Lucian Pintilie's new production of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* at the Arena Stage in Washington is an interesting case in point. Not one moment in this version emulates a previous staging choice by Stanislavsky, John Gielgud, Andrei Serban, Michael Blakemore, Peter Brook, or any other memorable production. It is completely original and yet—at least as far as interpretation goes—never violates the basic design of the play. Pintilie's *The Sea Gull* at the Guthrie some years back played havoc with Chekhov's structure by starting with the final act and making the rest of the play a flashback. This production, in Jean-Claude Van Itallie's elegant translation, is so faithful to Chekhov's form and text that it includes an interpolation—a short colloquy between Firs and Charlotta ending the second act—that restores a scene that Stanislavsky (sensibly) cut.

Still, I found the liberties of *The Sea Gull* often more faithful to the spirit of Chekhov's intentions than the constancies of *The Cherry Orchard*, and I believe the problem lies not with the concept but with the acting. Pintilie's approach to the play is visually striking, and his overall control is masterly. It is a production that continually stuns us into new thought—and makes the Brook version, by contrast, look like "deadly theater." But as often happens with auteur creations (Lyubimov's *Crime and Punishment*, for example), the advances in concept and stagecraft are at the expense of performance.

The Guthrie *Sea Gull* had acting weaknesses too; here, they are almost fatal. Shirley Knight's Ranevskaya is a dotty overweight bourgeoise with a high-pitched soprano only lapdogs could find tolerable—Shelley Winters crossed with Billie Burke. It is hard to remember that she (as Irina) was the one redeeming feature in the Actors Studio's otherwise ill-fated *Three Sisters*. Rebecca Ellens's Anya proves her mother's daughter in one respect—her shrill vocal delivery. Otherwise, she plays the part like a hopped-up teenager preparing for a prom. Charlotta Ivanovna is performed by that spherical bantam who exorcised the spirits in *Poltergeist*; she's doing much the same thing here, using the same uninflected nasalities.

The gifted Stanley Anderson, so compelling in Pintilie's *Wild Duck*, contributes the crudest Lopakhin I've yet

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seen, coarsened by a thick Slavic accent that alienates him from the rest of the non-accented American cast. Dunyasha is a splayed-out refugee from the chorus of *Oklahoma*, Firs an antebellum plantation black with diction ("Dey knew how to do it; dey had a recipe") more appropriate to the announced sequel of *Gone with the Wind*. Only Richard Bauer's Gayev, Mark Hammer's Simeonov-Pischik, Tana Hicken's Varya, and Henry Stram's Trofimov manage to navigate their roles without losing the humanity of Chekhov's vision, though Pintilie's passion for perpetual motion even makes their seamanship shaky at times.

The best performances on stage are by Radu Boruzescu's setting and by Pintilie's control of the space—elements that sustain this production at a continually engrossing level, regardless of weak characterizations. The design, built in the round, is essentially a bare painted floor and ramps, with an armoire at one corner that serves as bookcase, closet, and crèche. When Beverly Emmons illuminates the floor with her luminescent lights, it undergoes a mysterious transformation, dogs begin barking, and a child appears to blow on a toy horn. The child is the ghost of Grisha, the victim of Ranevskaya's indolence and irresponsibility, and he hovers near the action like a gentle rebuke. It is Pintilie's perception that not just the childish Gayev but all the characters of the play are stuck at some early stage of development, and when they gather in Grisha's nursery, they sit on children's furniture and play with toys that materialize from the armoire and roll down the ramp.

In the second act, an exterior, sheaves of golden wheat appear through the floor, and the armoire is opened to reveal a huge Orthodox icon festooned with candles. Presiding over the wheat field is an ominous scarecrow, almost human in a black mask, and at the eerie sound of a harp string, its head falls forward. During the third-act dance, that desperate party preceding Lopakhin's cataclysmic entrance to announce that he has bought the cherry orchard, the celebrants wear false noses and party hats, while the ghostly child watches their antics from the armoire. And in the final act, a broken chandelier perches on the floor, a forlorn relic of past grandeur amid the detritus of packing boxes and suitcases.

The last moments are inspired. (Pintilie's final images are always his best.) The family has departed for the train station, the nursery is deserted. The child Grisha emerges from the armoire and surveys the room. Suddenly, tremors on the stage begin to rattle Lopakhin's champagne glass, left behind on a table. The ancient and abandoned Firs enters to speak of the evanescence of life, his speech punctuated by ghostly taps (perhaps the distant sound of axes falling on the trees of the orchard). Firs lies down amid lattice-work shadows that now traverse the floor, and dies. The champagne glass rattles more violently, falls from the table, and breaks. Grisha displays a piece of string and drops it. He blows his horn again, the doleful music of a passing age. And then, as the floor opens, sheaves of yellow wheat rise up to gather Firs's body into the eternity of time.

Those soft exquisite moments, and many other illuminating touches, often compensate for the screechy aural trials of the overactive performances. They also suggest that it's not conceptual audacity that defines the limits of auteur directing so much as a tendency to subordinate characterization—the humanistic element of production—to stage business and textual interpretation. Like many European directors, Pintilie probably expects the cast to do its own work while he does his, without realizing perhaps that most American performers regard directors as acting coaches, and the rehearsal period as an exercise in re-establishing the elements of their craft. Whatever the case, I suspect that Bell and other critics of postmodern theater might be less hostile to the explorations of auteur directors if they saw more focused acting on stage. Bell calls "the experimentalism of avant-gardes . . . the trivialized succession of fashion" and charges "the practitioners of postmodernism" with substituting "pastiche for form and cleverness for creativity." Watching more powerful performances, Bell and his traditionalist school might be brought to see that the motive of postmodern art is not cleverness but illumination, not a regard for fashion but the desire to let tradition breathe through a suffusion of fresh life. □

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FIRMLY ROOTED IN ISRAEL, BRANCHING OUT IN NEW DIRECTIONS

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The literary and political illusions of Carlos Fuentes, everybody's favorite Mexican.

THE GUERRILLA DANDY

BY ENRIQUE KRAUZE

He speaks all his words distinctly, half as loud again as the other. Anybody can see he is an actor.

—Henry Fielding

IN THE family album of exiled writers (Conrad, Nabokov, Zamyatin, Kundera), a close-up of Carlos Fuentes reveals something odd about his image. Is he a willing exile from Mexico in the United States, or a reluctant exile from the United States in Mexico? He has become something of a star in North America, where he lived until the age of 12, to the extent that even an American congressman observed that "Fuentes is a great man. He knows so much about his country." The congressman had not read a single book by Fuentes; his opinion, like the opinion of so many others, had been formed by the omnipresence of the writer in the media.

In Mexico, Fuentes has an altogether different image. No one doubts his exemplary passion for literature and his professional attachment to it. He has published novels, stories, essays, drama, and countless articles. And yet for some time now his writings have been arousing irritation and bewilderment. Mexico is a country whose complexity has exhausted several generations of intellectuals, but Fuentes seems unaware of that complexity. His work simplifies the country; his view is frivolous, unrealistic, and, all too often, false.

In a poem by Octavio Paz, a story by Juan Rulfo, or a painting by Rufino Tamayo, Mexican life is the point of departure for the work, and the work participates in that life. Even certain foreign artists have captured what is new, and radically alien, about Mexico: the Mexican pink in Rauschenberg's canvases; the signs hanging on the cantina walls in Lowry's famous novel; the dark women in *Viva Zapata* walking over rough paving stones; the lighthearted, innocent cruelty in Buñuel's *Los Olvidados*; the market day in Lawrence's *Mornings in Mexico*. A reality embodied by Mexicans for foreigners to discover. But Fuentes, a foreigner in his own country, skirts that reality, and lingers over externals. For Fuentes, Mexico is a script committed to memory, not an enigma or a problem, not anything really living, not a personal experience.

There is the suspicion in Mexico that Fuentes merely uses Mexico as a theme, distorting it for a North American public, claiming credentials that he does not have. The appearance of *Myself with Others*, then, is timely. Its autobiographical pages finally reveal the origins of his intellectual sleight of hand. The book shows Fuentes's lack of identity and personal history. From the very start, it's clear that he filled in this void with films and literature. His real world was his fictional world: a cinematic sequence of authors and works. Lacking a personal point of view and an internal compass, Fuentes lost his way through the history of literature and found himself condemned to the histrionic reproduction of its texts, theories, and personages. The key to Fuentes is not in Mexico; it is in Hollywood. The United States produces actors for movies, for television, for radio, for politics. Now and then it produces actors for literature, too. Carlos Fuentes is one of them.

Myself with Others: Selected Essays
by Carlos Fuentes
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 256 pp., $19.95)

The Old Gringo
by Carlos Fuentes
translated by Margaret Sayers Peden
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 199 pp., $14.95)

I.

"THIS IS NOT a border, it is a scar." This statement by one of the characters in *The Old Gringo* is excessive as a description of the vicinity between Mexico and the United States, but an accurate epigraph for Fuentes himself. He was a gringo child of Mexican origin, born in Panama, a place where history and geography have indeed left a scar. On the outskirts of the Depression and the New Deal, his placid childhood was spent in the "territorial fiction" of diplomatic life, in a seven-room apartment that was "superbly furnished" and had a view of Meridian Hill Park in Washington, D.C. *Myself with Others* recalls long summers when "the livin' seemed easy," a good old time when Fuentes learned to prefer "grits to guacamole" and work to idleness ("no siestas for me"), and first dreamed the American dream: that everyone will be famous for 15 minutes.

On his vacations, he visited Mexico. "It was depressing to compare the progress of a country where everything worked, everything was new, everything was clean, with the inefficiency, backwardness, and dirt of my own country." In contrast to the North American past, Mexican history seemed little more than a series of "crushing defeats," beginning with the TTT: the "Tremendous Texan Trauma." Fuentes grew accustomed to seeing Mexico not on its own terms, but refracted through a North American perspective. No Mexican loses sleep over the TTT, and none would say, as Fuentes does, that "the world of North America blinds us with its energy: we cannot see ourselves. We must see *you*." Quite the opposite: Mexico has always been a country maniacally obsessed with itself. But Fuentes is a special kind of Mexican. He discovered the existence of his country at the age of ten, in 1938, when President Cárdenas decreed the expropriation of foreign oil properties. He suddenly realized that this "nonexistent country" was his identity, an identity that was slipping away from him.

"How I Started to Write" (an autobiographical chapter in *Myself with Others*) is a good example of the onomastic prose, worthy of a marquee, that is so peculiar to Fuentes. It introduces the veneration of the great names that would populate his life and his writings: Gene Kelly, Dick Tracy, Clark Kent, Carole Lombard, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and a long and indiscriminate etcetera. "When I arrived [in America]," he told an audience a few weeks ago at the National Press Club in Washington, where he had come

Enrique Krauze is deputy editor of *Vuelta* in Mexico City. His most recent books are *Por una democracia sin adjetivos* and biographies of 20th-century Mexican political figures in the eight-volume *Biografía del poder*.

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to help out with the Robert F. Kennedy Book Awards, "Dick Tracy had just met Tess Trueheart. As I left, Clark Kent was meeting Lois Lane. You are what you eat. You are also the comics you peruse as a child." Fuentes's was not exactly a life in exile, but an uprooting whose abrupt reversal in adolescence would leave a scar of ambiguity: "Mexico became a fact of violent approaches and separations in the face of which affection was no less strong than rejection."

The autobiographical pages make it clear that the only early links between Fuentes and his "paternal country" were a nationalism forged less by pride in the Mexican tradition than by resentment of the North American world, and by the determined effort he made throughout his childhood to preserve Spanish as his language. It is no exaggeration to see these links, respectively, as the origin of Fuentes's political and literary attitudes. When Fuentes finally approached "the gold and mud" of Mexico at the age of 16, language had already become "the center of his being and the possibility of joining his own destiny and that of his country into one." Mexico, the "imaginary, imagined country," was not a tangible, historical nation. It was only a victim of imperialism, an instrumental reality, a language.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Fuentes's struggle in Mexico to preserve the Spanish language led to the obsession with conquering it. The story of *Myself with Others* ends in 1950; to reconstruct fully the story of his struggle, one must turn to the testimony of friends, and to other incidental writings by Fuentes. Someone remembers that he became a mimetic being, all tongue and ears, a "brawler" with words. No wonder, because in Mexico the weapons of colloquial language are as sharp as, or even sharper than, real weapons. During those years he had already given up the idea of writing in English ("After all, the English language didn't need another writer"), but his use of Spanish indicated that he was tone-deaf to certain nuances, expressions, themes. He moved from reticence to excess: unexpected "damns," out of place "fucks." In sum, to a linguistic machismo.

Reality, however, was somewhere on the other side of language. In 1950 Mexico City was in the process of taking on the physiognomy of other modern capitals where Fuentes had been. He did not see the need, therefore, to go deeper into the countryside, where the reality of Mexico was more profound. His exploration of the city, although superficial, was incessant and orgiastic. Like a bedazzled and perplexed tourist, he lived the city of leisure, the nocturnal city, the show-biz city. He left out the workplace, working hours, and neighborhoods. Instead, he descended with pencil in hand into "the brash, sentimental, lowdown world of brothels smelling of disinfectant, cheap nightclubs decorated with silver-colored walls, the whores, pimps, magicians, midget strippers, and vaselined singers."

Mexico in the '50s was also defined (the word is Fuentes's) by its Star System: the muralist Diego Rivera and his scaffolding, the eyelashes of María Félix, the dancer Tongolele's shock of white hair, and the seal-like face of mambo orchestra leader Pérez Prado. To be a writer in the '50s, "one had to be" with the writer stars: Alfonso Reyes and Octavio Paz. Fuentes went so far as to live with Reyes in Cuernavaca. In the winter of 1950, he met Paz in Paris. Paz wrote about the young man who possessed "an avidity to know and touch everything—an avidity that is manifested in charges so intense and frequent that it is no exaggeration to call them electrical." It is significant that Paz speaks of avidity, not of curiosity. Fuentes urgently wanted to appropriate the latest intellectual keys to Mexico; he needed a complete libretto of the "imaginary country," and he thought he had found it in Paz's *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. His reading of that book was a revelation.

In 1958 he published his first novel, *Where the Air Is Clear*. Closely following the visual methods of the *U.S.A.* trilogy ("Dos Passos was my literary bible"), Fuentes took an important step in Mexican narrative: he acclimatized the genre of the urban novel that had been introduced two years before, with fewer literary resources but tellingly and honestly, by Luis Spota in *Casi el paraíso* (*Almost Paradise*). His main formal inspiration was Balzac. "I am very Balzacian. . . . In *The Human Comedy* (or, if you prefer, *The Mexican Comedy*) there is room for many storys." The image is exact. Fuentes envisioned Mexican society as a vertical social and historical stage set. In the basement were the masked, unseen Aztec gods, embodied as faceless beings who carry out their designs. And above ground were the various social classes: the nostalgic aristocracy, the "Croesohedonic" bourgeoisie, the arriviste middle class, and at the bottom, the common people.

Fuentes's first book presaged the character of his entire work. The intellectual itinerary that he had chosen in order to learn about the country was transfigured into a strange confusion of genres. The characters had no life of their own: they simply acted out fashionable philosophical theses. A philosophical poet clearly inspired by Paz appears throughout the novel and dies in a manner that recalls the chapter on death in *The Labyrinth of*

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Solitude; the ruined banker does not consult a lawyer but discusses the essence of the Mexican spirit with Paz's alter ego; and so on. The most successful parody is not of the bourgeois class (Fuentes scorned it without knowing it), but of the aristocracy, to which he belonged without really belonging to it: its parties, its snobbery, its dandyism, its uprootedness. But finally Fuentes lacked the practical knowledge of social life that may be found in Balzac, for whom a bankruptcy, the work of a printing house, or the fall of the stock market were concrete realities, not symptoms of the life of a class. And he lacked something even more important. "There, where your shoe pinches, is the touch of Balzac," wrote Harry Levin. In *Where the Air Is Clear* the common people do not suffer or work; they reflect philosophically on poverty in the setting of an endless and tragic binge.

FUENTES'S first novel does not recall Balzac so much as that great actor of painting, Diego Rivera: immense texts and murals that proceed more by accumulation and schematic juxtaposition than by imaginative connection. Both are painfully rigid in suggesting the inner lives of their themes and characters, both treat them as theses or burden them with a didacticism that grows tedious, both have recourse to allegory. Texts that are murals, murals that are texts. The best of Rivera is the flowering of his forms and colors. The best of Fuentes is in the verbal avalanche of his prose.

The great Cuban poet Lezama Lima wrote that "I have found his novel strong, urgent, abundant, throbbing with symbols and masks." This verbal eroticism was the real substance of the novel, and it limned the central paradox of Fuentes's future work: there was something chimerical in his attempt to write the social novel of a reality he had not lived, something false that was supposed to be disguised by intellectual mimesis and lyrical expansion. But it was not disguised. Language was still the center of Fuentes's being, and Mexico remained an "imaginary, imagined country." His vast reading, diligent but independent of any experience that wasn't academic or folkloric, was never enough to correct his limitation. He never came to know the country that would be the central theme of his work. He thought he could resolve the deafness of his origins by turning it inside out: history, society, the life of the city, would be assimilated to the raging tumult of its voices. Balzac's characters still survive in the literary and popular memory of Europe. Nobody in Mexico remembers the characters of Fuentes.

II.

LIKE THE great majority of Mexican intellectuals of all political tendencies (José Vasconcelos and Octavio Paz, Vicente Lombardo and Daniel Cosío Villegas), Carlos Fuentes celebrated the victory of the Cuban Revolution and interpreted it as an act of Spanish American affirmation: a triumph of Martí, not Lenin. For Fuentes in particular, the revolution had an additional significance: it seemed to resolve, not in language but in history, his latent identity crisis. It seemed to make his scar disappear. Revenge for the TTT. Mexico was still the imaginary country, but suddenly it was no longer necessary to compare it with the dubious paradise of the "cheerful robots" or with the cruel mirror of "crushing defeats." In an article published in March 1959, Fuentes maintained that Cuba had opened the doors of the future when it interdicted all the founding philosophies of the United States: Locke, Adam Smith, Protestantism, the free enterprise system—"weapons that are much too feeble to attack the problems of the 20th century." The nationalist vindication alone seemed to guarantee a happy ending.

"One must be Malraux," he had confided years before to a friend. Cuba offered Fuentes the opportunity to play a young, somewhat altered Malraux: the Malraux of a revolution in power. He traveled to Havana, he wrote enthusiastic articles, and with his closest friends he founded *El Espectador* (The Spectator), which in its short life closely followed the pulse of Cuba and interpreted the problems of Mexico in light of the Cuban experience. In Mexico, the natural effect of the Cuban Revolution was to push its old local homologue to the right, to make the Mexican Revolution seem like a pseudo-revolution.

This occurred, paradoxically, at precisely the time when the economic and social balance of the Mexican pseudo-revolution was not at all bad, whatever the point of comparison—internal or external, the past or the present. (The fundamental problem of the time was the growing insensitivity of the governing class, which blocked the country's political and economic growth.) Very few intellectuals, however, had the wisdom to judge the situation with any equilibrium—the young, influenced by the academic Marxism made fashionable by Sartre, least of all. Democracy, certainly, was not on their horizon. After Cuba, the only horizon was the revolution. In *El Espectador*, Fuentes asked: "Are we still in time to save the Mexican Revolution from the pitiful stupor it fell into in 1940?" To set it back on course, he thought it necessary to abandon the "impoverishing anarchy of free enterprise" and fight for a "strong State that would assume total control and rational, popular planning of economic development."

FUENTES'S Sartre was C. Wright Mills. Mills visited the University of Mexico in 1960 and taught a course on Marxism and liberalism. He envied the potential influence of the Latin American intellectual, who was, in his opinion, a unique factor for change in underdeveloped countries. For Mills, world competition was not a problem of power, but of prestige: the best model of industrial development would win. As for autocratic governments, Mills saw Leninism as the only way out. *El Espectador* disseminated Mills's ideas, and Fuentes, who adopted them as if they were a creed, dedicated his second novel, *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, to Mills. The colophon states the dates and places of its composition: Havana, May 1960; Mexico City, December 1961. An epitaph for the Mexican Revolution, written out of the vitality and hope of the Cuban Revolution.

In *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, Fuentes attempted to expose the prototype of the Mexican revolutionary, caught up in lies, corruption, and murder. Pursued by the phantoms of his victims—the idealists, the collaborators, the friends—and gnawed by the memory of true love and its abrupt demise, General Cruz, a sort of Mexican Citizen Kane, dies a slow, vengeful death. Outside, on the painted walls and in the empty speeches of the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI), the revolution was dying with him. The novel was an immediate and unanimous success. It is generally believed to be the best novel that Fuentes has written. It is certainly the most sincere. At a distance of 25 years, one is still struck by the verbal fury of an implacable narrator who, out of the ideological optimism of the early 1960s, censures the impurity of a revolutionary

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undeserving of the name. The explosion of indignation worked marvelously well in the novel's language, but it made the character of Cruz unbelievable. His villainy was too perfect: he had committed each of the Seven Deadly Sins and violated all of the Ten Commandments.

In the revolutionary narratives of Mariano Azuela, Martín Luis Guzmán, and José Vasconcelos, you can almost smell the gunpowder in the pages: death is real, made up of terror, hatred, blood, and stench. The characters are buffeted by contradictory and unpredictable wind storms, and their reactions are ambiguous. Almost a half century later, *The Death of Artemio Cruz* did away with all this ambiguity. The historical revolution lost its real contours. It had become corrupt. There arose before it its own idealized image: Revolution with a capital R. Now the pages smacked of ink, not gunpowder. Fuentes's novel functioned as an indictment by the younger generation of intellectuals who, from the vantage point of a revolution that shone for them, wished to prosecute a revolution that they considered betrayed.

CUBA'S ASSERTION of nationalism in its confrontation with the United States captured Fuentes's political consciousness in a definitive way. The North American world was still "blinding him with its energy," keeping him from seeing Latin American events in their internal variety and complexity. When the Soviet Union made its full-fledged appearance on the Cuban scene, Fuentes did not rejoice, but neither did he rush to the defense of usurped Cuban nationalism. His ideology would remain fixed in a narrow range marked out by the Mexican (Cardenist) Revolution and the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban Revolution's only sin, in his opinion, would be intellectual intolerance.

Fuentes wrote several pieces of political journalism more notable for their pamphleteering enthusiasm than for their spirit of objectivity. One of them, for example, was the result of a trip through Michoacán with Gen. Lázaro Cárdenas. For 30 years the general had been involved in the development of the region. In 1938 he had created a union of community collectives. The sad truth was that the project was a failure from the very start. The community collectives had stopped cooperating with each other; the land was subject over the years to leasing, individual distribution, and foreign investment; the state banks and corporations used the campesinos as political capital. Fuentes did not hide this reality, exactly. He simply saw another one, its very opposite, the reality of his revolutionary idyll:

> Here the detractors of community collectives are refuted. Here individualist and greedy ideas have not made their appearance. Here disputes, confrontations, and exploitation do not exist. The collectivists cooperate with each other, they distribute their harvests and collect their profits in the oldest spirit of all—one that, when it has been lost and forgotten, seems brand new: the spirit of fraternity.

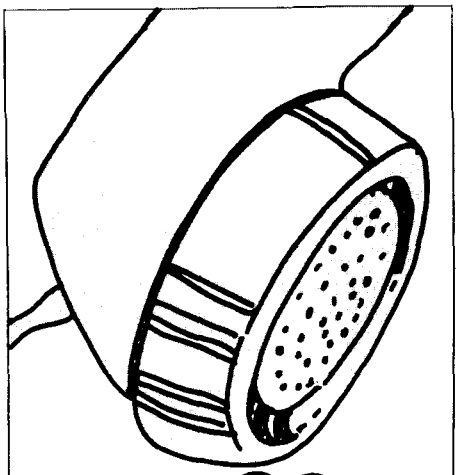
Later, in early 1961, Fuentes was a correspondent for the Mexican magazine *Política* and for the *Nation* at the meeting of the OAS at Punta del Este, Uruguay, where the incompatibility of the Cuban regime with democracy was noted, and Cuba was expelled from the organization. Two months after Punta del Este, however, the good student of Mills drew the natural conclusion:

> True representative democracy is socialist democracy, because in an underdeveloped country, only socialism can effect the structural changes capable of creating the real conditions of democracy. By declaring the incompatibility with democracy of the only Latin American government that is truly compatible with concrete democracy, the American states, paradoxically, have declared their own incompatibility with the future and with history.

In the days when he edited the *Revista Mexicana de Literatura* (Mexican Review of Literature), in 1955 and 1956, Fuentes's intellectual hero had been Camus: "See nuances and understand, never dogmatize and confuse." Seven years later Camus was dead, and Sartre was king. To be an engaged intellectual was not to be engaged with truth, but with the truth of revolutionary power. In political terms, the *Revista* had favored a third option: "neither Eisenhower nor Khrushchev: new forms of life and human community." But Cuba had been Fuentes's road to Damascus. The pale nuances of the third way, of the democratic option, for which so many of Castro's comrades were still desperately searching in 1962, could wait.

III.

MANY OTHER Mexican and Latin American intellectuals had followed the same ideological route, but very few had Fuentes's charm, his bril-



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liance, his command of genres. The library of every self-respecting young radical reserved a space for *Where the Air Is Clear* and *The Death of Artemio Cruz*. They functioned as mirrors of academic thinking, brimming with good historical and moral consciousness. The image they reflected was as seductive as their narrative techniques and their prose.

But the long-awaited revolution decided not to arrive; what was left was the consolation of verbalizing it. There is an old tradition, in Mexico, of leftist multimillionaires, but the new hypocrisy was less elitist: one didn't need millions, only a bourgeois lifestyle and an anti-bourgeois ideology. Pierre Cardin and Che Guevara. From the start, Fuentes had understood the possibilities of the Guerrilla Dandy. Now he took on that character in all seriousness, although not without some cynicism, in a country where the true writers of the left (José Revueltas is the greatest example) were suffering persecution and imprisonment.

"When you have a strong literary vocation," Fuentes declared,

> you soon find yourself facing the wall of bourgeois society that undermines and isolates the artist. For its own comfort, its own permanence, the bourgeoisie supposes that art and literature are innocuous, that they have nothing to do with practical life. . . . That is why there can be no rightist authors, authors who are accomplices of the status quo that denies all validity to their work. This is when the struggle begins between the writer and the bourgeoisie.

Never mind that so many among the bourgeoisie had bought his books. Fuentes felt undermined and isolated. He chose to live in Europe. He would never again take up permanent residence in Mexico. "The novelist goes through the world in search of his characters' identities," writes Fernando Benítez, in the introduction to the first volume of Fuentes's *Obras completas* (Complete Works), published in Spain in 1973. "We collected cities, sounds, smells, people, cathedrals, theaters." (And museums, cafés, provincial countrysides, concentration camps, islands in the Mediterranean.) The volume contains several Condé Nast-like photographs: "Carlos, stylishly dressed, seems to belong to that ambience of exuberant plaster goddesses, crystal candelabras, and old servants in tails." The autobiographical data prepared by Fuentes also testifies to his huge collection of friends, none of them obscure, almost all of them well-known figures in art, literature, politics, especially film. There are shots of the author with Joseph Losey, Jean Seberg, Passolini, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Arthur Miller, Candice Bergen, Buñuel.

Before he left Mexico, Fuentes published *Aura*, a small masterpiece of magic realism on the theme of love enduring through time. (The aura of *Aura* paled somewhat because of its direct debt to *The Aspern Papers*; in *Myself with Others*, Fuentes attempts to diminish the influence of Henry James, proposing a variety of inspirations for *Aura*.) During 1965 and 1966, he wrote *Zona sagrada* (Holy Place), the novel that links the greatest star of Mexican films, María Félix, and her loving son, an unfortunate Oedipus metamorphosed into a dog. This time the Mexican critics were not so enthusiastic. The misgivings centered on the artificiality of his characters, on their reduction to verbal or verbalizing entities. But by then Fuentes had already freed himself from characters, that "old humanistic category," "that sentimental fetish of the bourgeoisie." In the structuralism of Foucault, Sollers, Barthes, and the *Tel Quel* group, he had found his literary Cuba. Enough of Aschenbach, Bovary, Nostromo, Pedro Páramo, Dedalus: of "psychologizing subjectivity." Characters should be "transformers of the language, resistors to the language that runs through them and empties them." The novel was to be its own object, a linguistic structure valid in and of itself, where language meets the criticism of language.

ONE MIGHT HAVE thought that the novel seeks a specific form of knowledge, that it is a genre in which composition matters. But Fuentes said that his novels are like "cancerous growths" preceded by total, instantaneous knowledge:

> There is a magical moment when the mind is an Aleph, a Borgesian Aleph. Everything you want to say is there. It is like a constellation in which all the elements coexist: they are words, nouns, verbs, adjectives. And they are images and they are sounds—and they are all the senses—forming a marvelous, magical totality.

Fuentes never speaks about the content of his words. In interview after interview, he insists that literary exploration is an exploration of language, inside language. Fuentes has very little intellectual curiosity. He looks for the script in an author or an ideology, and with that as a starting point, without reworking or conceptualizing it, he invokes the demons of language. In his hands, though, those demons often amount to no more than a cunning catalog of names. Thus, in the Aleph of *A Change of Skin*, which appeared in 1967, there are intersections of unconnected beaches

REJECTION SLIP

"Oh, how glad I am that she
Whom I wanted so badly to want me
Has rejected me! How pleased I am, too,
That my Fulbright to India fell through!

The job with the big salary and the perks
Went to a toad of my acquaintance, a loathsome jerk
Instead of to me! I deserved it! Yet rather then resent
My fate, I praise it: heaven-sent

It is! For it has given me pain, prophetic pain,
Creative pain that giveth and that taketh away again!
Pain the premonition of death, mother of beauty,
Refinement of all pleasure relief from duty!

Pain that you swallow and nurture until it grows
Hard like a diamond or blooms like a rose!
Pain that redoubles desire! Pain that sharpens the sense!
Of thee I sing, to thee affirm my allegiance!"

The audience watched in grim anticipation
Which turned into evil fascination
And then a standing ovation, which mesmerized the nation,
As he flew like a moth into the flames of his elation.

DAVID LEHMAN

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and bullfights, crematoria and Aztec sacrifices, Theresienstadt and Cholula, Nazis and Jews, gringos and Mexicans who just want to get even; all things are the same thing, an optical illusion of "pulverized identities," as one critic put it. Thirty, forty names per page. (Hals, Klee, Capri, Dietrich, Lorre, Garbo, Cuauhtémoc, Milan, Singapore, and Cole Porter are all on page 150.) An abundant inventory of streets, magazines, cities, book titles, song lyrics, and above all films ("Not Greece, not Mexico, the world is called Paramount Pictures Presents"). Never has a novelist been so possessed by the noun.

The reader of *Myself with Others* can verify not only Fuentes's propensity for making catalogs, but also that his essays are as theatrical and derivative as his novels. His procedure may simply be an imitation of a popular writer (Kundera rediscovers Diderot, Fuentes rediscovers Diderot rediscovered by Kundera); a presentation of a popular theory (the odd avant-garde reading of *Don Quixote*); or an awkward attempt at a fiction based on other people's fictions ("Borges in action"). When the devices disappear, and Fuentes views the "others" from an independent "myself," the result may be a faithful and moving portrait, as in "Buñuel and the Cinema of Freedom." But this almost never happens. In the name of his right to experiment, Fuentes writes works without a center: vast, confused, formless, and oppressive literary happenings, parodies of novels that he or others have written, or parodies of themselves.

IN 1968 Fuentes went a step further. He saw reality literally impersonating fiction. With novelistic opportuneness, the Revolution—the show of shows—returned to Paris. Fuentes saw words by Breton, Marx, Rimbaud, etc., on the walls, he recalled *Alexander Nevsky*, he listened to the young people talking about a European Moncada, he heard Sartre compare students to workers and praise the "admirable" pragmatism of Castro. On the basis of these images and sounds, Fuentes wrote "Paris: The May Revolution." This time the Aleph (in an illumination that made him feel like Borges, and Whitman) showed Fuentes the end of the Affluent Society. He saw a tide of change that would reach as far as Moscow and Washington, he saw the general will expressed with rocks and not with ballots, he saw strikes at Anaconda Copper, barricades in Arequipa, corrupt leaders in Mexico, he saw "the death of God

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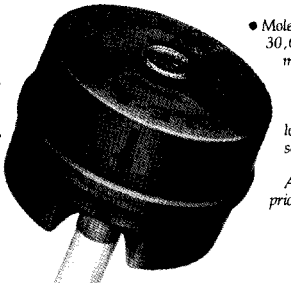

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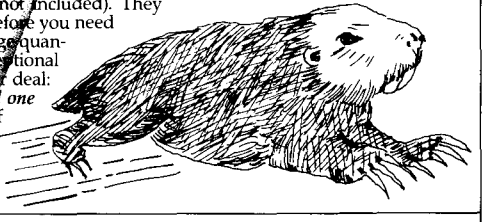

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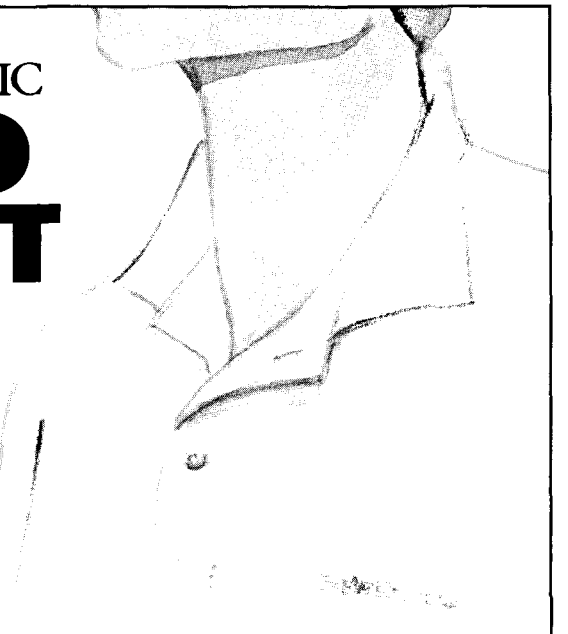

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and his privileged Western creation: white, bourgeois, Christian man."

A year later, when Fuentes returned to Mexico, he hung a huge photograph of Zapata in his study, he let his own mustache grow longer, and he paraphrased Daniel Cohn Bendit, one of the leaders of *les événements*: "We are all Zapatists." And he had more visions. He saw that Latin America had lived four centuries of "sequestered, unknown language," he saw that our works should be works of disorder, that is, of an order contrary to the present one, he saw that the Latin American intellectual sees only with the perspective of the revolution: "To write about Latin America, to be a witness to Latin America in action or in language, means more and more a revolutionary act." In sum, he saw the novel in power, and power in the novel.

For the Guerrilla Dandy, there is no frontier between reality and fiction. Many years later, Fuentes revealed in an interview that he has always wanted to be a poet: "Richard III gave his kingdom for a horse. I would give all my books for a line by Eliot, Yeats, or Pound." It is only natural that in the optical illusion of his identities he has not seen himself for what he really is: a lyric poet lost in the novel and the essay, a spirited and abundant poet, though a little deaf to the beauty of the language. A macho, a stud, an Artemio Cruz who treats words like whores. His cherished need to impregnate everything with the sentimentality and the rhetoric of a lyric poet is the source of his problems as a novelist. In fact, Fuentes's old obsession with language ties him to a time, and to a rhetoric, that will pass very quickly. This novelist has run against the current of the novel's development. The author has not disappeared behind the text (as he was supposed to, after Flaubert, the Russians, Musil, Broch, Kafka, Nabokov, Faulkner); the text, instead, has disappeared behind the author.

IV.

ONE MAY FORGIVE the hallucinations of 1968. What happened later, however, was decisive. In Mexico, after the student massacre of October 2, 1968, in Tlatelolco, real revolution, armed revolution, seemed the only way possible to many young people. While Fuentes was "loading his words with dynamite," the guerrillas in the Sierra de Guerrero were moving from words to dynamite. Would he join them? Would he offer critical opposition to the authoritarian and anti-democratic regime? No, something had changed.

Some interpreted the significance of 1968 as a profound affirmation of civil society in the face of Mexico's political system, and aimed to consolidate spaces for independent criticism. But most intellectuals, Fuentes among them, chose to subordinate their vision and influence to the power of the new president. The first group was seeking the endlessly postponed alternative of freely choosing what kind of Mexico it wanted. The second believed that they already knew what kind of country their society wanted. Artemio Cruz was dead. The Mexican Revolution was coming back to life, they believed, and playing the role of a "new Cárdenas" was President Luis Echeverría.

DURING THE first months of the Echeverría administration (1970-76), Fuentes published *Tiempo mexicano* (Mexican Time), a collection of his best essays and journalism of the previous ten years, along with an interpretation of the recent past and of the regime (which he thought promising) of his friend the president. The book reiterated Paz's old idea that the revolution is also a fact of myth, not only a fact of history: "Mexico broke its masks only with the Revolution. . . . In [it] the face of Mexico is the mirror of Mexico." And what Fuentes saw in the mirror was almost an occupied country: "We are a dependent, semi-colonial nation. Our maneuvering room is no greater than Poland's." The basic facts of Mexico's prostration seemed very clear to him: a foreign debt of $4 billion, an oppressive rate of inflation, and so on. "Development for the sake of development" was useless. The solution lay, as he had written in 1962, in abandoning the "holy immobility of the center" and fighting for the energetic intervention of the state in economic life.

Fuentes considered it natural that the enterprises created by the state would be sufficiently numerous, broad, and productive to relegate ancillary functions ("tobacco stands and little grocery stores") to private enterprise. He remembered Mills's commandment: intellectuals and university students should be the agents of change. But instead of going to the mountains with a rifle, or even worse, "into their father's little business," young people should board the train of the revolution turned into a government, and there become the "vanguard" that Lenin described. Because the state embodied the revolution, the state, too, could be worshiped. "Mexican socialism," Fuentes realized in 1973, when he was living again in Paris, "will be the result of a process of contradictions . . . of confrontation between the national state and private enterprise, between the nation and imperialism, between the workers and the capitalists. Marx foresaw it all."

POINT BY POINT, Echeverría implemented the political program of Fuentes's intellectual generation as it was summarized in *Tiempo mexicano*. He swelled the power and the size of the state by adding tens of thousands of university students to the payroll. Wallet in hand, he corrected inequalities by increasing the foreign debt, which amounted to $26 billion at the end of his administration. The bureaucratic "vanguard" grew by almost two million people. By the end of his term, the "new Cárdenas" had become one of the richest men in Mexico, a Third World Artemio Cruz. And for the first time in a half century, the country that Echeverría was supposed to have raised from its prostration knew the effects of true inflation: the combined loss of real wages, financial health, economic growth. The practical result of the populist program against "developmentism" and dependence, then, was to hinder development, to deepen the dependence and the debt.

In politics, the performance of the government was even worse. On June 10, 1971, there was a reprise of Tlatelolco, in which hundreds of students were massacred in the streets by official paramilitary forces. The president vowed to investigate, and never mentioned it again. Then the public learned that Echeverría, a former minister in the government of Díaz Ordaz, was himself implicated in the repressions of '71 and '68. This time Fuentes did not see what everyone saw, he saw what no one saw: "All the forces of Mexican reaction plotted to set a trap for Echeverría, stigmatize the new regime, discredit the difficult, carefully considered democratic option with which the new president tried to overcome the deep crisis of '68."

Fuentes was not the only intellectual, of course, who believed in Echeverría and took part in his parody of revolution, but his support reached grotesque extremes. Shortly after June 10, he maintained that the intellectuals who did not support Echeverría against the "real" culprits (the invisible forces of the right)

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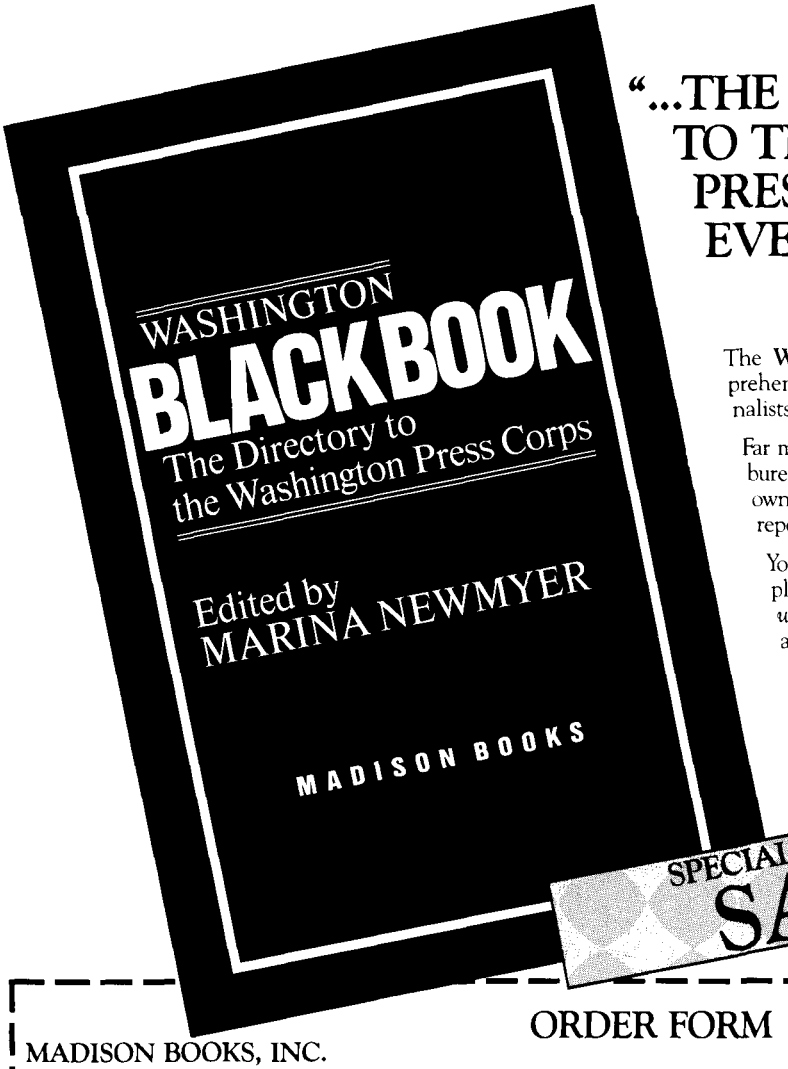

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were committing a "historic crime." The Mexican intellectual Gabriel Zaid responded that "the only historic criminal is Luis Echeverría," and later admonished Fuentes: "You have used your international prestige to put pressure on the executive instead of putting pressure on independence in its confrontation with the executive. . . . You have made independence more difficult." For Fuentes, however, independence was a bourgeois value, a clamoring for "a model of democracy that was parliamentary, pluralist, British: I cannot help smiling at this Anglo-Saxon perspective." True independence was shown, rather, by the president, in the face of imperialism and its "lackeys" in the private sector. Thus, in 1973, Fuentes praised the way in which Echeverría had made the bureaucratic apparatus more "dynamic," had fought (if "only verbally") against private enterprise, had managed public funds "with absolute honesty."

In January 1975 Echeverría named Fuentes his ambassador to France. In July 1976 the president orchestrated the coup against the management of *Excelsior*, the country's leading newspaper. Everyone knew the details of the president's support of the coup. Everyone except Carlos Fuentes, who defended Echeverría publicly: "Is it conceivable that a man as politically astute as Echeverría could be the author of his own discrediting?" Yes, it was perfectly conceivable. All you needed was to break away from the idolatry of the state and the revolution, and open a window to concrete facts. But that was never the intellectual intention of Fuentes, for whom objectivity is both "impossible and undesirable."

V.

A WORD HAUNTED Fuentes during those years: totality. He had been a "Joycean before reading Joyce." In *A Change of Skin*, one of his characters is possessed by a frustrated longing for the absolute: "to fix the past forever, to devour the present immediately, and to take charge of all imminence of the future." The fragmentation of reality seems vulgar to him. Years later, in an orgy of Joycification, his real self fulfilled his experimental dream: he wrote *Terra nostra*.

Obsessed by the mechanisms of power in Latin America, he had proposed to capture in a single vision the collective time of the founding of Ibero-America. In an essay written in 1973, "Cervantes o la Critica de la lectura" (Cervantes, or The Criticism of Reading), he had explained in detail the historical dimension of his project. He wanted to capture the Spain of the Counter-Reformation: monolithic, vertical, dogmatic, severe. Its perfect representation was the Escorial, Philip II's living tomb. Opposed to this fortress, and corroding it from within, was the *other* Spain, full of Arab sensuality, Jewish industry, Renaissance utopias, the Spain dreamed of in 1520 by the rebellious communards of Castile: democratic, pluralistic, tolerant, respectful of individual existence and local autonomy, watchful of the king—the Spain of Erasmus. The idea could not have been more ambitious. The novel's theme is the phantom, the dream, the desire for liberty in the walled cloister of the Counter-Reformation.

Fuentes could deal with the torments of the flesh in the Escorial, but the torments of faith escaped him: the novel recounts them ad nauseam, but it does not re-create them. The reason is clear. In *Terra nostra* he avoided throwing himself into the ring with his characters. He narrated the bullfight from an intellectual box. Or even less: he narrated a narration about the bullfight in the opacity of 800 pages, expressly accumulated in order to impose his majestic self on the reader: "I never think about the reader. Not at all. *Terra nostra* is not made for readers. . . . When I wrote it I was absolutely certain that nobody would read it, and in fact I wrote it with that in mind. . . . I gave myself the luxury of writing a book without readers." Joyce condemned the reader of *Finnegan's Wake* to spend as much time in reading the book as he had spent in writing it. Fuentes surpassed Joyce in *Terra nostra*, with its facile paraphrases and pastiches, and its transcriptions of encyclopedias and catalogs. The novel's real theme is its author's fascination with absolute power, not with the other Spain, the one that invented the word "liberal." The democratic values of the communards seem more alien to Fuentes than a Miuran bull. Ultimately, the book gives the feeling of a pathetically closed space: of totality that leads to asphyxiation.

In fragmentary passages, *Terra nostra* reads marvelously well, but its essay-characters do not really live their desires and their ambitions. In Fuentes, there is no existential exploration. His novels (*Terra nostra* most completely) are intraliterary—sometimes only intraverbal—exercises more akin to French structuralism than to anything Joycean. This lack of existential anchoring is the decisive difference between the actor and his model, but not the only one. Joyce worked at an extremely slow and steady pace, in careful and complex reflection. Fuentes proceeds by inspiration:

> I can write in a plane, in a bus, in a hotel room—anywhere I am—with ease. . . . There are writers who work very slowly because they are painfully looking for that adjective, that verb. I prefer to privilege the cataract: I will let everything rush through me and over me like Niagara Falls with a sort of *confianza*, a confidence. I give in to the abundance of language because I am . . . like a Bernini statue. I am abundant.

THEN, suddenly, briefly, Fuentes removed the makeup, came down from the stage, turned out the lights, and walked out incognito to wander through Mexico City. A line by Paz concerning the mythic destruction of the Aztec city came to mind: burnt water. In *Burnt Water*, which appeared in 1980, Fuentes plays no one but himself. It is not written by himself as a personage, but by himself as person. These four perfect stories show, again, that his calling as a writer is the authentic investigation into the tragic fate of the city he loved. Suddenly, in a kind of parenthesis in his career, Fuentes is not afraid to create "psychologizing subjectivity," characters who dare to feel tenderness, filial love, pity, and the most bestial hatred.

A poor old woman, surrounded by street mongrels, remembers the ancient palaces in ruins, and an invalid child listens to her. A native aristocrat clings to the decorative world of his house now situated amid decay and drug violence, a nest of rats that do not conquer him: they devour him instead. And in "The Son of Andrés Aparicio," there is the life story of a lumpen turned bodyguard. Here the city is not unreal or purely visual. It is a visceral city, a city in pain. Here the extraordinary recreation of language is not the end, but the means. There are no useless names, no social or political didacticism, no reflections on the nature of the Mexican spirit, no sentimental lyricism. There are only four fragments that touch the Mexican soul of Carlos Fuentes.

This parenthesis of real feeling was closed, however, in the 1980s, when Fuentes definitively established himself in the country of his childhood and allowed himself the luxury of writing a

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nationalistic Western for American readers. *The Old Gringo* is a minor work. The book's explicit subject—Ambrose Bierce—is its least striking thing; Fuentes gives the basic facts, but he fails to penetrate Bierce's hallucinatory life. *The Old Gringo* is important, rather, because it reveals Fuentes's methods of appropriation and distortion with devastating clarity. The beginning of the novel is derived, for example, from *Memorias de Pancho Villa* (*The Memoirs of Pancho Villa*) where its author, Martín Luis Guzmán, narrates the twofold death of the English rancher Benton at the hands of a Villista. Who would notice? Nobody in the United States knows Guzmán. Then, along with Bierce, the novel presents an opaque, enigmatic Mexican general named Arroyo, and a God-fearing Methodist school teacher who eventually succumbs to the transfiguration, to the sexual, telluric strength of the general; and the similarity to Cipriano and Kate in D. H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* is certainly remarkable. As Fuentes has written, "Is there any book without a father?"

After liberating himself from the imaginary need to imagine, Fuentes goes on to rearrange completely the history of the Mexican Revolution. In *The Old Gringo*, briefly, Zapatism becomes Villism. Fuentes transports the peasant revolution of indigenous southern Mexico to the northern border. He situates his story in Chihuahua, where there were *no* problems concerning land, *no* conflicts between haciendas and communities, *no* peasants in ponchos, *no* people drinking mezcal. It was easier that way, because he could imitate Jesus Sotelo Inclán's book about Zapata, which no one in the United States (except John Womack's readers) would know. In 1971 Fuentes wrote that "literature says what history covers up, it forgets or mutilates." Many Mexican readers of *The Old Gringo*, however, found themselves convinced of precisely the opposite.

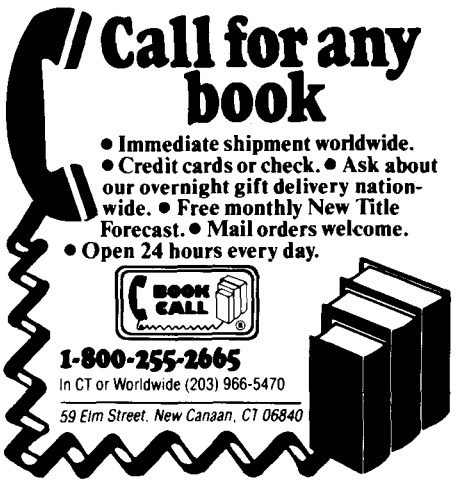
VI.

THE CENTRAL AMERICAN crisis and the Reagan presidency opened the second chapter of a historical drama begun in 1959. It was natural that Fuentes, living now in the States, should become passionately interested in the conflict, but the similarity between his attitudes of the early '80s and his attitudes of the early '60s is disconcerting. By now, to be sure, it is a commonplace among the liberal left in Mexico to criticize Cuba, to let slip some slight doubts about internal affairs in Nicaragua. (Its own experience taught the Mexican left not to scorn "formal" democracy.) But Fuentes is humming the same old tune. He has said that Cuba is a colony, and that Marxism is intellectually facile; but he only demands of Castro "a little more *glasnost* and *perestroika*." His support for the Sandinistas has been complete.

Still, he has also experienced a good amount of intellectual confusion; it is difficult to serve truth and power at the same time. In his commencement address at Harvard University in 1983, and in various articles and conferences, Fuentes has referred to "the constant battle with the past" that Latin America is waging, a past of theocracy, centralism, paternalism: the fortress of the Counter-Reformation still imprisons us with its dogmas and hierarchies, its confusion of public and private rights, "its faith in ideas over facts." Fair enough. But then Fuentes is immediately enamored of precisely those closed political systems that are the heirs of the Counter-Reformation.

FUENTES SEES clearly the mental prison of these countries, but he does not quite lament it, or see himself enclosed in it. His reading of the Central American conflict grows out of his old fascination with totality, with unity, with order. Reading him seriously can be a twisted adventure in dialectic. Consider his defense of the Sandinista revolution. At times he achieves a certain distance: "There is a sacred element to the revolution: that is why it does not tolerate opposition." But he also joins the faith: "The total history of a community is revealed in the dawn of the Revolution."

The political imagination of Fuentes seems frozen in the commonplaces of 1962, which not even the latest speechmaker of the PRI could repeat without blushing: "All of us in Mexico exist and work thanks to the Revolution." An eternal 1968, Fuentes's revolution is not only sacred, it is universal and inevitable as well. Speaking of the revolution, Fuentes the iron historicist reminds the North Americans that "their republic was also born out of the barrel of a gun." Speaking of democracy, however, Fuentes the tolerant relativist invokes "cultural contexts": every country should come to its own version of it. Unlike de-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mocracy, the revolution does not recognize frontiers or cultures. It is always the same—1648, 1776, 1789, Mexico, Havana, Managua. When it comes, it demands patience. Violence—Marx dixit—is the midwife of history. That is why the Arias plan took him by surprise. Arias's democratic legitimacy does not mean much to Fuentes: democracy does not reveal the total history of a community, only the fragmentary will of its citizens.

THERE IS something even older and more frozen in the moral imagination of Fuentes: his old scar of identity. The love/hate he feels for the United States cuts him off from the possibility of any intrinsic understanding of Latin American phenomena. ("We cannot see ourselves, we must see *you*.") In response to the obligatory question regarding the need for democracy in Central America, Fuentes always has his ready-made answer: "Why does the United States worry about democracy in Nicaragua and not in Chile?" As a question, it is valid. As an answer, it is not. It defers the establishment of a democratic order until the United States stops being hypocritical, which is to say, until the cows come home. In Fuentes, there is a dependence on dependence.

We can all agree that the relations of the United States with the Caribbean, Central America, and Mexico are marked by a vast historical outrage assiduously carried out by North America long before a Cuban headline at the beginning of the century announced that "hatred of the North American will be the religion of the Cubans." It is an outrage made up of incomprehension, inattentiveness, prejudice, racism, exploitation, stupidity, disdain. Its greatest mistake was not to recognize, and to support intelligently, the liberal regimes of this century, trusting instead in "our bastards." And Reagan's bravado, his references to "freedom fighters" and to the "backyard," keeps the outrage alive.

But granted that all this is true, what is the responsibility of the Latin American intellectual? Once again, Camus: "To see nuances and understand, not to dogmatize and confuse." To point out endlessly, if you like, the historical responsibility of the North Americans, but to take note as well of the contribution that the revolutionaries themselves have made to the disaster. The struggle of the Miskitos has nothing to do with the adventure of William Walker. Fuentes reproduces Reagan-like illusions when he believes that the Sandinistas are the real "freedom fighters," struggling in the name of history, revolution, and destiny against the only enemy, which is imperialism. In Nicaragua, where he was becoming known as "the tenth comandante," Fuentes had the same idyllic visions of 1962, 1968, and 1976, and he exclaimed: "There will be foot-stamping and tail-thrashing by the dinosaur—the United States—but the relationship will change." An elemental, resentful, rhetorical nationalism, one that excludes all other values, is the sum total of Fuentes's political ideology.

After Fuentes's visit to Nicaragua early in 1988, Pablo Antonio Cuadra, the poet and the managing editor of *La Prensa*, wrote:

> I have been a friend of Fuentes, and I admire his literary work; but I never thought that he would take up again the old Spanish American rhetoric that has caused so much harm and confusion, in order to polarize concepts and reduce the very serious Nicaraguan problem to a struggle between David and Goliath in which, of course, one must be on the side of David. And what of the brutal Russian Goliath? . . . It is a great shame and a great responsibility, because the influence of men like him should serve to balance the scales. He should have seen that our poor America is exhausted by those great concepts that cost blood and misery . . . and all for nothing. Men like him could exert influence on fanatics to make them sane again, to make them think, to turn them once again toward objectivity and realism. Many of the comandantes are not Castros, but imitators who could be saved if so many intelligent people did not play their game.

Carlos Fuentes has not even recognized his own uprootedness as a problem. His politics are elemental and dogmatic. His literature is brilliant and insubstantial. He has created only one extraordinary character: Carlos Fuentes.

—Translated by Edith Grossman

THE PARANOID'S PARADISE

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction
by Jean Starobinski
translated by Arthur Goldhammer

(University of Chicago Press, 460 pp., $60, $19.95 paper)

It is now some 30 years since Jean Starobinski's *Transparency and Obstruction* was published in French. It is still the second-best book ever written about Rousseau, the best one being, of course, the one Rousseau wrote about himself. It is the author of *The Confessions* who interests Starobinski most; in the pages of that book he has found the original divided self that created modern literature, and an insatiable moral and political radicalism. For *The Confessions* is not only a personal history, it is also a public statement. Rousseau claimed that his life had a political significance and a philosophical meaning. What sort of society, after all, made possible a life such as his?

Rousseau had much to confess. He had lied, stolen, betrayed the defenseless. He had helped nobody and abandoned his children as soon as they were born, because they would have limited his independence. Despite all this and more, the self-portrait that he presented to a mysteriously hostile world showed a uniquely innocent and naturally good man, a man who had looked for perfect oneness with others but was always rebuffed or deceived, so that he was forced to retreat into solitude. There he had found a fleeting union with "the Great Being," but no enduring rest.

As Starobinski shows, it was a self-imposed predicament. Rousseau would know only either/or—transparency or obstruction, immediacy or indirection, intimacy or estrangement, home or flight. That was the source of his radicalism, and of his new and marvelous style. It captivates his readers by making them believe that they are being told all, that perfect self-expression has found a language at last, that they are seeing a mirror image of the author, and of his and their world as well. The sheer contrivance of all this is so great,

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according to Starobinski, that Rousseau emerges as one of the greatest literary confidence men of all time. The reason he is always successful is that he does not tell us how good he was, but how badly and irresponsibly he behaved in spite of his intrinsic goodness, his loving heart, and his deep and active conscience. He was both the best and the worst of men, uniquely perfect in his nature, but constantly deflected by a corrupt society from the path of goodness.

By appearing to be so painfully truthful, Rousseau not only absolves himself, he persuades his readers to look at the world with his eyes. One never forgets that it was "they" who made his life a succession of vacillations and ambiguities. As Jean-Jacques swings back and forth from solitude to society, from true virtue to self-indulgence, from the vanity of the writer to the silence of the mystic, botanist, and music copyist, we know that he was driven. Above all, he was always sincere; and it was he who made sincerity the highest virtue of the modern world and an unblemished heart the excuse for every social vice.

In the autobiography, then, there are always three selves—one that suffered the deformations of society, one that remained pure, and one that looks back upon its own past to justify it and offer it to the gaze of an uncomprehending world. And there is, of course, a fourth man, the one who created Rousseau for our benefit, not only in *The Confessions*, but in all his writings, which are, in Starobinski's view, just as self-revealing, both implicitly and explicitly. He reminds us that Rousseau knew exactly what he was saying, but only intuitively: "It took Freud to *think* Rousseau's feelings."

ROUSSEAU BEGAN his literary career with a furious blast at the modern world, because it had lost those civic virtues that had made the Spartans so admirable and replaced them with enervating vanities. Whatever his initial motives for writing that first prize essay, the first *Discourse*, its consequences were psychologically explosive. He discovered his own moral uniqueness in the course of criticizing society, and this sudden flash of self-recognition unlocked his literary energies. He became a professional, and enormously creative, author. It also put him permanently at odds with himself and others. As a celebrated author, he could not maintain his role as a morally superior outsider, as the last true citizen. He was now just another man of letters: the very species he had excoriated.

To prove to himself that he was still his own master, free to denounce whomever he chose, he quarreled with everyone, on the pretext that nobody was capable of that immediacy of perfect friendship that he had offered them. Seeing himself so utterly alone, Rousseau did not expect to alter an alien society, but only to curse, and possibly to warn, it. He admitted that he could only have his say about his native Geneva, which he occasionally pretended to love, when he was in exile from it. To be entirely outside one's time and one's place can be an excellent vantage point for animadversion, but not for a revolutionary or a reformer.

ROUSSEAU'S second essay, a genealogy of inequality, begins with man's blissful natural state of perfect sensual self-sufficiency, goes on to expose his gradual decline into sexual and economic dependence, and ends with the rich tricking the poor into a false but binding social contract. There is no resolution to this movement of escalating human misery and damaging inequality, for its origins and development involve our inner life no less drastically than our social exchanges. Inner disharmony and mutual conflict, inextricably joined in our development, are insurmountable. There is no exit from history. *The Social Contract*, which sets out the principles of a just political order, is not, in Starobinski's reading, a tract for ending this oppression, but only a yardstick against which every modern society can measure its failures. The discovery that all our vices are due to inequality, and that all our politics are exercises in injustice, does not liberate anyone; it merely shows us how our society looks when it is seen from the bottom up.

For Rousseau himself, the insistence on his moral isolation, on which his imprecations indeed depended, dictated a turning inward, to the homoerotic educational fantasies of *Emile*, and to the more conventional romance of unhappy love in *La nouvelle Héloïse*, and finally to *The Confessions* and the *Rêveries*, which is a prose poem to nature as the refuge from the bonds of society. "The critique of society," Starobinski writes, "thus turns into an epiphany of private consciousness." What else could the last authentic man in Europe do? He had always been an obsessive daydreamer. He now found the perfect language to make them public. The readers were certainly there waiting for his books.

In spite of all the adulation that his works brought him, Rousseau remained sure that no one truly understood his writings, or him. No one was willing to be as open to others as he was; and to protect himself he chose to hide in an imaginary world. There is something about this turn in Rousseau's writings that Starobinski does not like. He does not deny that *La nouvelle Héloïse* is very readable and psychologically acute, but he does not care for its social atmosphere. He is particularly bothered by the festival in which masters and servants forget their social positions for a day; this is fraternity without equality on an autarkic estate run on patriarchal principles by a godlike master and his Christ-like wife. Nor is he especially pleased by the cloying sentimentality of a triangle of beautiful souls that the husband effectively controls.

Starobinski is also quick to note how utterly the tutor dominates his pupil in *Emile*, even when the latter is quite grown up; to sell one's freedom for perfect psychic harmony may not be an appealing prospect, and Starobinski's

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book, generally far from uncritical of its subject, as a man or as a thinker, clearly finds this a particularly dispiriting dream. It is a dream, however, that has an intense appeal for adolescents, for whom personal friendship is the very core of existence. In the preface to his novel about the anguish of love and friendship, Rousseau specifically says that it was written for the young. I am not sure that he was wrong in encouraging them to indulge their longing for that one perfect moment when two souls do seem to touch. In any event, as Starobinski notes often enough, there would be no modern novels without longing. Still, following his acknowledged master Hegel, Starobinski does not like the pretensions of those who live by the "law of the heart."

The pure of heart may not always invite the scorn of their fellow men, but they are certainly not natural joiners. One of the reasons Rousseau thought that any legitimate society would have to be based on, and created by, men who were like himself was that he thought of himself as the perfect outcast of a thoroughly corrupt society. When he boasted, not without cause, in a furious letter to the archbishop of Paris, that all the rulers of Europe seemed to have formed a league against "the son of a watchmaker," he was declaring both his pride in his universal exile and the world's complicity in it. Mostly he did not, however, enjoy his isolation, even though he certainly brought it on himself. Starobinski makes much of Rousseau's paranoia. There is no doubt that the man was mad. The trouble is that, as Delmore Schwartz once said, even paranoids have enemies.

ROUSSEAU *was* persecuted for his unorthodox religious and political opinions, and even if he was not the victim of a universal conspiracy, he was driven from one place to another all over Europe. It was not just in his imagination that he was being pursued by potential jailers. And that had some bearing on his future fame, which also was not just a matter of Jacobin misunderstanding and incomprehension. As Starobinski claims, Rousseau was more interested in being than in acting; but writing is a very deliberate form of action, and Rousseau's works did not make him popular with the authorities of the ancien régime. If he had not fled, he would have landed in jail, his many influential friends and admirers notwithstanding.

I rather miss from Starobinski's version the class resentment and rage, especially of the young Rousseau, that make *The Confessions* such a bristling and exciting book. That work is not only about wanting to return to the bed of *maman*, as he called his first real lover. It is also about Rousseau as a young footman serving at an aristocratic table and showing everyone, including the beautiful daughter, that he was smarter and better educated than the son of the house. For once, as he remembered so many years later, things were in their natural order, as the girl for an instant saw him as a man, not merely as a servant. And *The Confessions* includes also Rousseau's discovery that "everything depends upon politics" when he was fired from his job as secretary to the totally incompetent (but aristocratic) French ambassador to Venice. And there is Rousseau, late in life, telling the Genevans what he *really* thought of them—that they were a bunch of selfish shopkeepers. Nor should one forget his account of the poor peasant forced to hide his food in fear of the tax collector. Rousseau without his inflamed sense of injustice is not complete, and there is not enough of that part of him in Starobinski's book. He was certainly crazy and self-infatuated, but he may have been right.

THERE IS, finally, the question of the ultimate sources of this new sensibility. Again like Hegel, Starobinski is sure that it is all an expression of residual biblical religiosity: the state of nature is our lost Garden of Eden, society our fallen state, and every human authority a replica of the God of the Old Testament. This is criticism as a search for archetypes, and it is very revealing. To find the meaning of a text, one matches it against the appropriate mythical archetype, and so invests it with the character of its original and with a wealth of associations that adhere to the primal story and to its many derivatives. It is a satisfying way of reading, especially those texts that somehow do not age. In Starobinski's hands, moreover, the reference to archetypes never overlooks all that is novel and personal in Rousseau.

But there is an aspect of Rousseau's religiosity that is lost when one looks only at his inheritance. He tells us, after all, that he does not share the simple faith of the vicar who is called upon to instruct Emile as he approaches puberty. The adult tutor, Rousseau, has quite different problems. He is tormented by skepticism; hence his violent rejection of Montaigne as insincere and vain. He was sure that most people would be morally worse and more miserable without some sort of belief in God and in a life after death, and that most could also use some civic religion. He was less vulnerable to these infirmities, of course, than most of mankind, but he also found doubt intolerable, a threat to his intellectual and emotional equilibrium.

GOD HAD TO exist so that Rousseau could be saved from what people like him came to call "nihilism." It was clearly important for him that some evils be universally reviled by all men in all places at all times, and that authority grounded on these judgments should protectively hold him, and others like him, in a paternal embrace. That is why Rousseau is the voice of protest against every social rule *and* the voice of therapeutic moral authority. The one is an aspiration to perfectly unfettered intercourse between men, the other is a resentful and fearful fortification against dangerous impulses within oneself, and against even more terrible ones imputed to all other people, especially to women. (Starobinski has nothing to say on that subject, but indirectly his book helps us to understand one of the most embittered misogynists of all time.)

Transparency and Obstruction is everything a commentary should be. It is an exploration that reveals a great deal to those who have read Rousseau carefully but cannot have noticed all that Starobinski, who is both a literary critic and a psychiatrist, has found. Moreover, his arguments and explications are so well put, and so unassertively stated, that they invite reflection, argument, and even disagreement. Rousseau claimed that he hated being talked about, but he did everything possible to make sure that people would gossip about him all the time. The readers of his books still want to discuss him. They will all be grateful for this fine translation of Starobinski's remarkable work.

JUDITH N. SHKLAR

Judith N. Shklar is John Cowles Professor of Government at Harvard University.

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O ALBANY

Quinn's Book
by William Kennedy

(Viking, 289 pp., $18.95)

The city of Albany, New York, has in William Kennedy, its much-lauded citizen—winner of Pulitzer, National Book Critics Circle, and MacArthur Foundation awards—found its Homer. In his trilogy, *Legs*, *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game*, and *Ironweed*, Kennedy put together a portrait from street-level, showing the city through the eyes of its mobsters, newspapermen, hustlers, and hard-luck Irish. *O Albany!*, by contrast, served up the histories and legends of the place from the more detached altitude of the chronicler-raconteur. Now, with *Quinn's Book*, Kennedy has attempted a novelistic fusion of history and fancy. Alas, even Homer nods.

To begin with, not only is Kennedy mesmerized by the possibilities of his chosen setting, he is also showing signs of the Balzacian itch: he seems to want his novels to link up through character-crossover until a whole imaginary world has been populated. Billy Phelan, for example, is the son of Francis Phelan, the protagonist of *Ironweed*. In the new novel, a deeper ancestral link is forged. Daniel Quinn, the hero, is grandfather to his namesake Danny Quinn, also of *Ironweed*. As Kennedy affirmed in an interview in a recent *New York Times Book Review*: "They're all interconnected. I've worked out the genealogies. New lines are established that I hope will be part of future books. It's inexhaustible. . . ."

The link between the earlier works and the new novel seems merely expeditious, however. For while the trilogy is sharply naturalistic, *Quinn's Book* may be viewed as Kennedy's flirtation with genre fiction—specifically, with the sort of parodic extravaganza attempted by John Barth in *The Sot-Weed Factor* and by Erica Jong in *Fanny*. Historical circumstance is the springboard, the source of situations and stylistic inventions. The general idea is to filter period material through an authorial presence rendered ironic by much historical hindsight. The result, at least in this case, is an awful conspiratorial winking in the tone, a prose incessantly parading around in some silly costume. Here is Kennedy's opening:

> I, Daniel Quinn, neither the first nor the last of a line of such Quinns, set eyes on Maud the wondrous on a late December day in 1849 on the banks of the river of aristocrats and paupers, just as the great courtesan, Magdalena Colón, also known as La Última, a woman whose presence turned men into spittling, masturbating pigs, boarded a skiff to carry her across the river's icy water from Albany to Greenbush, her first stop en route to the city of Troy, a community of iron, where later that evening she was scheduled to enact, yet again, her role as the lascivious Lais, that fabled prostitute who spurned Demosthenes' gold and yielded without fee to Diogenes, the virtuous, impecunious tub-dweller.

These first words, I have already read in reputable places, herald a narrative that is Dickensian in amplitude and García Márquesian in its magical animation. Certainly we are to applaud the ambitious blending of the ribald and picaresque with the matter-of-fact. But there is nothing original here. The passage is pure pastiche, a rip-off of the Colombian master that is not made clever or excusable by the play with a Latino name. In García Márquez, the complex manipulation of tenses and the shuffling together of image-laden clauses is done in the service of an awe-struck narrating sensibility—a sensibility invaded and transformed by the visions it would relate. There is nothing of the kind in Kennedy's book. The grown-up Quinn who is looking back to tell his story is supposed to be a journalist and war correspondent of some repute. But he is posing when we first shake hands, and, as a result, we never trust him again.

The García Márquez lead also proves to be a red herring, for after a few trial shots at magic realism—a prophetic vision descried in the open eye of a corpse, an ice jam that grows into a mountain—Kennedy jettisons the mode. It's almost as if he decided in mid-chapter that a more native prototype would be better suited to his needs. Would that he had gone back and erased his footprints.

The other big name invoked is, as I said, Dickens. But that's not quite accurate, either. Kennedy's prose has nothing of the richness of detail or comedy; nor can he even approximate the flash and sparkle that Dickens elicits from his collisions of characters. No, in its thin superficiality and deus-ex-machina improbabilities, *Quinn's Book* is better compared to those quickly concocted dime novels that eviscerated Dickens for devices and played to the public's enormous appetite for sensation and melodrama. Just listen to the basic plot line.

The whole show starts on that dark, disaster-filled December day—a day of flood and fire and mounting calamity that surely blazed with apocalyptic suggestion in the memories of the denizens of Albany. Young Daniel Quinn, 14-year-old orphan, errand boy for "John the Brawn," local strongman and river rat, witnesses the capsizing of the aforesaid skiff. Quinn and his boss hasten to the rescue. But they are—it seems—too late. La Última is frozen stiff, a clear goner. Quinn, however, managed to catch the hand of her pretty 12-year-old niece, Maud, who is very much alive. The two fall promptly and irrevocably in love.

Back on shore, Quinn and Brawn hie the body and the girl to the mansion of one Hillegond Staats, a wealthy and eccentric widow devoted to good deeds. (Her estate is also a station stop for runaway slaves.) No sooner has La Última been laid out in the special "doodkamer," or death chamber, of the house, than Brawn conceives a necrophiliac lust for her. And lo! A little tickle to those experienced old loins and the lady sits up with a smile. Soon the lusty rogue has his paddle in the good widow's waters as well (the genre is, briefly, pure Frank Harris), while the hand-holding innocents, Quinn and Maud, look on. The two then seal their private vows with a soul-kiss, and Maud makes Quinn swear that he will come to rescue her—she doesn't specify from what or whom—whenever she gives the signal. He agrees.

Hereupon the narrative becomes too episodically fractured for close tracking. New characters are introduced by the page, many of them disappear just as quickly. The foursome sets out via canal-boat toward Buffalo. But on the morning after departure, Quinn wakes up by the side of the canal—dastardly John the Brawn has betrayed him. Alone, disconsolate, pining for his Maud, our hero makes his way back to Albany.

There, in a trice, he is up to his neck in adventure and intrigue, getting the in-

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genu's obligatory education in hard knocks. Quinn gets caught up in the smuggling activities of the underground railroad; he tags along during a riot by factions of the Irish underclass; he finds out about a hush-hush cabal of bosses and thugs known as The Society. In short, he functions as the sugar-coating on the pill of a history lesson. Oddly, none of his experiences change or enlarge him—he remains the same eager, upright, and dim stick figure throughout. The only changes that Quinn undergoes are external. He comes under the protectorship of Will Canaday, idealistic editor of the *Albany Chronicle*, learns the arts of reporting, begins a career as a journalist. The mirage of Maud, of course, never stops wavering in his soul.

A few years pass. Quinn is made to meet up with Maud for one ill-timed moment—just long enough to show us that Maud is going the route of her aunt and becoming a stage performer—then they are again parted. The next section opens in 1865. Quinn is now a celebrated correspondent from the front lines of the Civil War. Maud, having predictably become a star (the aging La Última has retired), is engaged to a Gordon Fitzgibbon, who happens to be the new owner of the Staats manse. Kennedy then quickly ties all loose threads together into one big efficacious lovers' knot: the four who so gallantly breasted fate together many years ago are reunited. La Última, who throws a soiree because she believes she is dying, ends up in the arms of John the Brawn, now a prosperous retired boxer. Maud and Quinn are last seen in the clinch of true passion. Finis.

KENNEDY IS evidently enraptured by the legends of Albany—its rough river-men, its power politics, its formative ethnic clashes. And, truly, the materials for a major historical novel are all there. But *Quinn's Book* is not that novel, not by a long shot. Kennedy has rashly assumed that a set of type-cast dime novel characters are sufficient pretext, and that the swirl of history around them will provide color and content in abundance. But the flatness of these cartoon figures—Quinn as do-gooder and blank slate, La Última as gold-hearted old bawd, Brawn as lovable scoundrel, and Maud as the ultimately virtuous prize—ensures that the events will be registered with equivalent flatness. The history cannot live apart from the consciousness that perceives it. All of the brawls and catastrophes and glimpses into the dark cog-works of power politics read like scene sketches from a novelist's notebook.

Here, quite randomly excerpted, is Quinn's recounting of how he came upon Dirck, the kidnapped son of Hillegond Staats:

> I found Dirck in the farthermost stall, face down in soiled hay, wearing the same ill-fitting clothes he'd been wearing when abducted. On close look it was not animal droppings but his own blood that had soiled the hay. I rolled him over to see his face and found it a total wound, a horrifying smear of blood, gash, and swelling. His eyes told me that he was still alive, but not for long, I judged. I did not know how to help him, but my instinct was to clean his face, find his bleeding and stop it, just as I had aided John the Brawn in conserving what remained of his blood after a street fight.

Nothing wrong with this, you might say. Not technically, no. The sentences follow in order, provide the basic clues for a reader to visualize. But that's all—basic clues. There is no precision, no conveying of shock or fear, no fastening on the quick, living details. The passage is representative. Kennedy rarely gets any better, or worse, than this. The story slogs on in just such undistinguished, tired sentences. Open to any passage in, say, *Ironweed* and you will see how far the stylist has fallen.

And the reason? Hard to say. It may be that the historical distance was just too much for the author to bridge in imagination. But the problem may also have to do with Kennedy's recent exposure to screenwriting and its less arduous demands. I suspect that the writing of *Quinn's Book* coincided, at least in part, with Kennedy's work on the screenplay of *Ironweed*. The pace and exteriority of the new novel are patently celluloid. Indeed, the screen, rather than the page, might be the destined home for these slight lives. For the camera inevitably enriches stereotypes, and it catches the grain of concrete details that prose cannot always reach. Kennedy would not have to change much—just the second word of the title. That job done, he could get back to what he ordinarily does so beautifully: real writing.

SVEN BIRKERTS

Sven Birkerts is the author of *An Artificial Wilderness: Essays on 20th-Century Literature* (Morrow). Morrow will publish *The Electric Life: Essays on Modern Poetry* early next year.

TRB, *from page 4*

deeply rooted throughout Japanese society and culture, whereas the forces that propel exports are centrally directed. Clearly, if forced to choose, the Japanese would balance their trade by cutting exports. "Managed trade," in other words, would mean less trade, not more trade. Today's managed traders are Commodore Perrys in reverse, threatening: "Stop selling to us, or else!"

But a restraint on trade has precisely the same effect whether it is imposed by the buying country or by the selling country. Advocates of managed trade emphasize that their proposal is an alternative to tariffs and quotas—because they accept the premise that traditional protectionism is harmful—but there is no practical difference between their proposal and traditional protectionism.

Free trade theory does not assume reciprocity. It holds that you benefit from your own open borders whether or not the other fellow follows suit. No American is forced to buy Japanese products. We buy them because we wish to. "Managed trade," like ordinary protectionism, would simply deny Americans products they want to buy at prices they wish to pay. It would make our economy less efficient and our citizens less prosperous. That, at any rate, is the case for free trade. You can deny it if you wish, but you can't evade it by talking about "managed trade" and pretending you don't mean protectionism.

The danger is not that the Japanese are genetically programmed to produce more than they consume forever. The danger is the opposite: that they'll start calling in their IOUs. Then we'll discover that running a trade surplus is a lot less fun than running a trade deficit. That's why (as I suggested in this space three years ago) if we're going to impose any trade rule on the Japanese, we'd be better off requiring them to keep running the $60 billion surplus indefinitely.

The trade deficit is a symptom of our economic dilemma, not a cause. Imagine a family that has run up a huge bill at the grocery store and finally loses patience. "Look," they tell the grocer, "we insist that you stop extending us credit. Either buy something from us that you don't really want, or stop selling us food." There's no mystery which option the grocer would pick. The mystery is why the family would think its problems were the grocer's fault.

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MOSCOW DIARIST

Big Deal

ARMAND HAMMER, who fancies himself Mr. Détente, declared there's no place "on earth" he'd rather have been than Moscow while Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev were summitting. Well, I was there too, and, believe me, there are nicer towns—Belfast, Pyongyang, maybe even Beirut. I exaggerate. But Moscow is the world's most overrated city, summit or no summit. Except for Red Square (lovely at night) and the Kremlin (well-preserved), it's a shabby, cold, unfriendly place. Moscow was spruced up for Reagan's visit, but you could hardly tell. The bottom third of light poles were freshly painted along his route from the airport to downtown. This may have fooled Reagan as he gazed out from his limo, but it looked ridiculous to everyone else. Hammer wrote in the *New York Times* that the "mood of the people was summery and light." No way. As best I could tell, folks in Moscow were joyless, sullen, and subdued. When I tried to hail a taxi, all I got from cabbies was "Nyet." The trick, I discovered later, was to hold up a pack of Marlboro cigarettes, a precious commodity. Then taxi drivers and everyone else stop and offer a ride. I only had to walk a block from the Mezh Hotel, where most of the press stayed, to find a long queue at a food store. At the Central Military Department Store I ran into the same problem that exists at American department stores: bad service. But in the U.S., stores don't hire enough clerks. In Moscow there are plenty of clerks, only they won't wait on you. By waving my arms, I attracted a clerk and got a Red army belt, the only thing worth buying. It cost three rubles ($5.50 at the official exchange rate, or $1.50 if you changed money on the street). P. J. O'Rourke, a writer on assignment for *Rolling Stone*, encountered one happy consumer at GUM, the big store on Red Square. The guy was from North Korea. He thought he was in a shoppers' paradise.

THERE'S A LOT of truth in the joke Reagan tells about the American and the Soviet who compare their political systems. The American says his country is so free that he can go to the White House, storm into the Oval Office, and tell the president to his face, "You're doing a lousy job." Big deal, responds the Soviet. I can do the same. I can go to the Kremlin, walk into General Secretary Gorbachev's office, and tell him personally, "President Reagan's doing a lousy job." At the summit there was considerable criticism of Reagan in the Soviet and American press, and from Soviet officials. But not once did I hear any criticism of Gorbachev. (Reagan went out of his way not to zing Gorbo, his host, in public.) Sure, everybody's down on Stalin, so much so that I couldn't get a Stalin poster at the state poster store on the Arbat. But Stalin died 35 years ago. The real test of *glasnost* is whether public criticism of numero uno (the man, not his policies) is tolerated. I'm waiting.

THAT REMINDS ME of another joke widely repeated in Moscow, at least by American reporters. A man goes into a Soviet bar and orders a beer. He's told the price has been doubled from 50 kopecks to one ruble to allow everyone to contribute to *perestroika*. He pays his ruble and, to his surprise, he gets 50 kopecks in change. "How come?" he asks. "We have no beer," the bartender says. After seeing the Soviets up close in all their glorious inefficiency and backwardness (fresh fruits and vegetables are as scarce as computers), it's harder to take them as seriously as a threat to our national security. In the event of a nuclear war Mexico and Canada had better watch out. Chances are, Soviet missiles aimed at Washington and New York won't come close to their target.

THE SOVIETS LACK the deft touch in selling themselves. But they are cynical in the quest for hard currency. At the press center, Tass offered pictures for sale, including new ones of Ron and Gorbo and old ones of historical figures. Two were of Leon Trotsky, who hasn't been rehabilitated. Naturally they tried to charge more because of that. *Literaturnaya Gazeta* offered free record albums of Tchaikovsky and other Russian composers to Americans who would take out a subscription. A floor below the press center, a Soviet store sold summit T-shirts. I bought four at $20 a pop. During briefings the KGB was active. Rather than take pictures of spokesmen such as Marlin Fitzwater, security types photographed American reporters. Sometimes they videotaped reporters. All for their files. On a counter outside the briefing room, Intourist laid out its travel brochures, the least alluring ones I've ever seen. "Visit the USSR in Winter!" one ordered. I brought this back to give to my enemies. My favorite said, "Visit Soviet Turkmenia." Inside it showed some natives holding watermelons.

U.S. SECRET SERVICE agents ran into trouble when they tried to get the KGB to designate a special room or office for them near wherever Reagan was appearing. They wanted a secure place to take anyone who threatened the president. A White House advanceman told Hugh Sidey of *Time* (who told me) that the Soviets didn't understand why the room was needed. The Americans insisted it was required for questioning any suspects, but still the Soviets didn't understand. Finally, an American agent asked a Soviet where the KGB took folks it grabbed as threats to Gorbo. "Far, far away," the KGB man said.

A VISIT BY Armand Hammer to the press center was inevitable, given that he is one of the world's foremost egomaniacs and publicity hounds. Besides, it was his money that helped pay for the Mezh Hotel, where the press center was located. At least the Reagan administration had the gumption not to sponsor his appearance. It was the Gorbachev administration that came through for Hammer. As reporters waited for two State Department officials after Reagan's press conference, Hammer and four Soviets showed up to tout a golf course he plans to build in Russia somewhere. He's been talking about building it for ten years, and he's making progress. He brought along a scale model. There's no reason to believe the Soviets want or need a golf course. They hardly understand the game. One of Hammer's Soviet allies described golf as "a sports game which originated in Scotland. . . . The idea is to cover a certain number of holes with a certain number of hits." When Hammer got the mike, he said he was "very humble" in the midst of so many talented journalists. Sure. Then he chattered on about "a multinational chemical consortium" he heads that is building "a plastic complex" in western Siberia. I put my pencil down.

FRED BARNES

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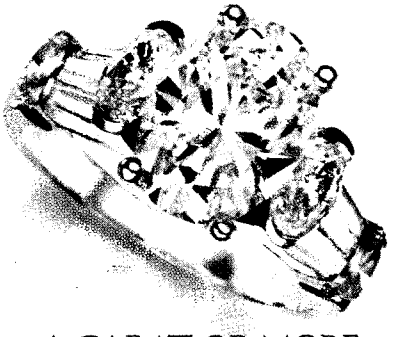

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